The Magical and the Mundane: Individualism, Corporate Identity, and Postmodern Pastiche in the Detective Novels of Haruki Murakami

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THE MAGICAL AND THE MUNDANE: INDIVIDUALISM, CORPORATE IDENTITY, AND POSTMODERN PASTICHE IN THE DETECTIVE NOVELS OF HARUKI MURAKAMI

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of English in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Central Florida Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2002
ABSTRACT

In Murakami's detective novels, pop culture references, irony, and hard-boiled genre conventions combine with magic realist prose to articulate the search for individual identity in a Japanese milieu structured by traditional communal values. At the same time, Murakami’s work remains grounded in Japanese literary tradition, and he sees himself very much as a product of modern Japan. The thesis traces the blending of these diverse tendencies in three of Murakami’s most popular novels: *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, and *Dance, Dance, Dance*.

The Introduction provides an overview of the project, critical reception of Murakami’s body of work, and my methodological approach. The overview provides the cultural and social background for the individual/corporate tension within his novels. Then, I examine current critical debates surrounding Murakami’s works including his position as a postmodern writer and his status as a national author. In my methodology section, I outline my marxist, new historicist and psychoanalytic critical approaches to Murakami’s work followed by an exploration of his use of magic realist prose within the detective genre. Each of the next three chapters provides a close reading of one of the novels in which I examine through Murakami’s recurring stylistic method the progression of his exploration of identity. The conclusion argues that the sense of coherence in Murakami’s writing project stems from a recurring stylistic method and consistent effort to suggest new forms of living out Japanese cultural identity in postmodern, globalized terms.
For Leon,

watashi no koi,

who gave me my first Haruki Murakami novel
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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Overview of the Project

Haruki Murakami has been a major yet controversial player among Japan’s literary scene for over two decades. Murakami, the son of two Japanese literature professors and the product of a post war Japan, has a diverse experiential pool from which to draw his literary style. His works are a fruitful mixture of politics, economics, and pop culture. Through his early work as a translator of Western novels into Japanese, Murakami became familiar with the works of such greats as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Raymond Chandler, the latter of who Murakami thinks, “rules the hard-boiled genre” (Wright 39). His father’s enthusiasm for the rigidity of formal Japanese literature gave Murakami a strong backing in his country’s literary history, while conversely driving him toward a search for freer literary forms such as science fiction and modern American literature. He especially immersed himself in writings from the 1920’s to the present, with The Great Gatsby by Fitzgerald and The Long Goodbye by Chandler as two of his favorite books (Matsuoka 424). His knowledge of Japanese literary history, modern American fiction and literary genres all create the foundation for Murakami’s literary education and the basis for his own literary imaginings.

Despite the international flair depicted through the metropolitan atmosphere of most of Murakami’s fiction, he is always careful to signal Japanese locality with authentic place names, historical references, and more. At the same time Murakami’s
narrative pastiche incorporates elements familiar to Western readers, his work remains grounded in Japanese literary tradition. Ironically, the Western atmosphere of Murakami’s style creates a paradox when translated. Technically his prose smoothly translates from Japanese into Americanized English. What is missing, however, is the impact of how Americanized his work appears to his Japanese audience. As Western readers we take for granted his American style because we are not expecting a novel in the Japanese tradition, but for the Japanese readership the constant references to international popular culture and the onslaught of borrowed words can be startling when contrasted with other Japanese contemporary writers (Castelli np). Murakami admits that it was difficult to write against the current of stiff, formalized Japanese literature. When he first began his career he wanted to be an international writer, but as quoted in his Publisher’s Weekly interview he soon came to realize that he is undeniably “a Japanese novelist,” and continues with “I was born in Japan and I speak Japanese and I write in Japanese. So I had to find my identity as a Japanese writer” (Devereaux 113). What he is doing is “seeking a new style for Japanese readership,” partially by looking at Japan from the outside (113). He explains that writing as a Japanese author removed from Japan gives him a different perspective and language in which to change Japanese literature from the inside. Through the skillful amalgamation of Western sensibility and culture with Japanese language and imagination, Murakami is succeeding in creating a new style of Japanese literature (Devereaux 113). The goal of this study is to trace the blending of these diverse cultural tendencies in three of Murakami’s most popular

However, it is important to note here that Murakami’s body of work encompasses many genres. His most successfully selling book, *Norwegian Wood*, takes the form of a romance rather than a detective story. He follows up his departure from his detective novels in *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, a romance about a man torn between the wife he loves and the nostalgic pull of his childhood love. Murakami is also the author of several popular collections of short fiction, *Dead Heat on the Merry-Go-Round* and *The Elephant Vanishes*. His writing style is maturing and developing in an exciting way. *Underground*, Murakami’s nonfiction account of the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack, is a thoughtful and incisive work proving that Murakami is more than just the writer of detective and romance genre fiction.

Murakami’s popularity as a writer is one result of the mass appeal of the aforementioned heterogeneous collection of writings. Conversely, his literary success comes with the burden of celebrity in Japan where it is expected that he become a full-time public figure. Authors in Japan are as recognizable on the streets as movie stars in the United States, making it impossible for Murakami to remain anonymous in public. His wish for peace and time to write drove him to leave Japan and live in America, where he was not recognized. He taught at Princeton and then moved on to live in Greece and Italy. Recently Murakami returned home to Japan. Translations of his work into English brought his novels recognition among Western readers, increasing his popularity (Wright 39).
The literary environments in Japan and America are becoming increasingly similar along with a growing similarity in lifestyles. This phenomenon allows American and Japanese readers to read contemporary Japanese and American literature through comparable frames of reference (Matsuoka 424). Murakami’s appropriation of the detective genre along with his pop culture references makes his work readily accessible to Western readers. His use of magic realism furthers this identification among world writers as “one of us” rather than Japanese. However, Murakami’s work is not a digression from Japanese literary tradition. He sees himself as Japanese and his work as a product of modern Japan.

Although I expound on the origins and types of magic realism further on in my methodology section, I feel it is relevant to pause here and note how Murakami utilizes certain aspects of this literary style in furthering his own narrative purposes. For example, the magic realist tendency—defined by Joseph Childers—for “combining realistic depictions of events and characters with elements of the fantastic, often drawn from dreams, myths and fairy tales” is evidenced in the narrative acceptance of golden unicorns in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (Childers 256). In addition, Murakami’s distillation of characters into types by their lack of personal names is a representation of the current shift within magic realism away from psychological issues towards social and political concerns. In magic realist texts magic is often used as a tool for correcting social, cultural, and political dilemmas. Murakami uses magic realism’s corrective aspects in *A Wild Sheep Chase* to motivate the narrator to explore the necessity for change within the general structure of Japanese culture. In Murakami’s
case, pop culture references, irony, and the detective genre combine with magic realist prose in order to articulate the search for individual identity in a Japanese milieu structured by traditional communal values.

Stylistically, while the magic realist framework allows for flexibility and experimentation, the detective genre provides narrative structure and allows Murakami to retain some measure of coherence when his narrative threatens to break completely with horizons of "reasonable" expectation. Within the genre of detective fiction Murakami readily adopts the hard-boiled style of writers like Chandler in his own work. His adaptation of the detective genre mixed with a cosmopolitan form of magic realism is the basis of his controversial position amongst the Japanese literati. Some literary critics see his works as bungaku, popular writing, rather than as the respected junbungaku or pure literature (Strecher, "Beyond" 354). The argument in Japan between the bungaku and the junbungaku parallels the Western argument between high literature and genre fiction. Murakami redefines 'pure' literature as writing relevant to contemporary issues and is indifferent to the opinions and conventions of the Japanese literary community to observe rigidly to traditional Japanese forms. His work is one of individuality wherein he as a writer breaks out of his contemporary Japanese mold and focuses on the stories he tells. Whereas, traditional Japanese writers adhered strictly to the structures of the various poetic and fictional forms, Murakami blurs the borders of the genre forms he uses. For example, Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World crosses the borders between the genres of fantasy and the detective novel. Murakami is not bothered
by the debate surrounding his work, and though controversial, Murakami’s texts have been translated into fourteen languages and have sold millions of copies.

It is my premise that Murakami is striving to imagine a new way of living out contemporary Japanese cultural identity that enables members of Japanese society to be individuals on a global scale, while still keeping the traditions and cultural values that make them Japanese. My contribution is at the intersection of stylistics, genre, and identity formation. Where other critics view Murakami’s use of magic realism as a tool to create two worlds connecting the past with the present, the real with the unreal to explore a sense of identity which is never fully asserted or separated from communal society, I read Murakami’s use of magic realism as a means by which individuals can access their unconscious selves, where the foundations for their individual identities exist. Magic realism is the medium in which the unconscious self can be retrieved and consequently formed into a person’s identity, which then asserts itself as the person’s conscious self. Murakami’s use of magic realism to smooth the merging of literary genres allows for the acceptance of individuality in a culture heavily based on social conformity by freeing the self identity brought forth from the unconscious from communal expectations.

Even though Murakami’s writing contains protagonists who are Japanese, his style has been criticized for being too foreign. Critics are reluctant to accept his writing as Japanese because instead of focusing on traditional Japanese culture, Murakami borrows heavily from American and Western popular culture, language, and literature. In an interview with New York Times book critic Herbert Mitgang, Murakami responds to
the rejection of *A Wild Sheep Chase* by Japanese critics. He explains, “they didn’t think I was *majime-* that’s a word meaning earnest or sober. Writers like Kobe and Mishima are considered *majime* because of what they wrote” (Mitgang 13). He further goes on to admit that no matter what the critics think about him, he considers himself *majime*². His skillful manipulation of magic realist prose demonstrates Murakami’s right to call himself *majime*. Thematically, Murakami uses the juxtapositions of empirical reality with imagined reality in his magic realist prose in order to signal the individual’s struggle to resist the pull of societal expectations. At another, possibly deeper level of narrative production, magic realism affects the genesis of resistant individual existence through the elaboration of an unconscious or imagined world. By creating two worlds that abut each other and then maneuvering the text back and forth between these worlds Murakami reveals the quest for individual identity and the subsequent growth of that identity.

Before we can comprehend the quest for individual existence undertaken by Murakami’s protagonists, we must know what it is that they view as opposed to attaining individual self. The most significant cause for resistance among Murakami’s heroes is the looming presence of a corporate environment. Japan’s corporate system embodies the communal identity that Murakami’s protagonists challenge. When interpreting Murakami’s detective prose it is essential to understand why a communal corporate identity is seen as a hindrance to self actualization. Through a sociological reading of his detective novels the reader can view the ways in which Murakami’s heroes combat what they see as a hostile threat.
Murakami’s reasons for viewing communal identity as a threat to individuality result from the social and political turmoil of 1960s Japan. After the Zenkyōtō student uprising failed in 1969 in its struggle opposing the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, there followed less public interest in political issues and more concern with increasing wealth and economic status (Strecher, “Magical” 264). Japan experienced rapid economic and technological growth in the decades following the 1960s. Japanese society had to conform along with its economic surge. As a result, “the new Japan trains its citizens as well adapted functionaries in its corporate program, mobilizing them far more efficiently than any militarist regime ever has” (Miyoshi 240).

Along with the shift from political to economic concerns, many Western concepts were introduced to Japan. The integration of Western culture within Japanese society provides the social context for Murakami’s constant references to ethnic foods, pop songs, and Western literature. His characters are as comfortable eating Italian food, listening to the Beatles, and reading Turgenov’s *Rudin*, as they are riding the subways of Tokyo, exploring the rural areas of the Japanese countryside, and cooking Japanese food. However, Japan’s quest for economic supremacy hampers the individual’s search for *shutaisei*, a term formed after World War II to describe the Western idea of an individual self as opposed to the previously held Eastern view of individuality as a form of selfishness. The uneasy quest of Japan’s own search for a national identity after the tragic circumstances of the Second World War focused on what defines Japan as a nation state and neglected the idea of *shutaisei*. In the late 20th century Japan had a strong sense
of national identity and its place in a cosmopolitan global economy. Nevertheless, individual identity remained undefined.

The problem of individualism is illustrated even at a syntactic level in Japanese language. The subject in Japanese does not need to “be explicitly stated so long as it is implied and/or understood” creating a dilemma for those who wish to express themselves as individual parts of the whole (Iwamoto, “Voice” 297). Not surprisingly, perhaps, much of Japan’s writing creates ambiguity surrounding the individual’s status in society. How may individuals exist outside of communal identity if the idea of individualism is alien to the culture in which they live? This dilemma is what Murakami’s protagonists are trying to solve. The nameless heroes of his early detective novels work on distinguishing their individuality and developing their understanding of the effect individualism has on their roles in society. The protagonists’ mediocre existence, blasé reactions, and ironic viewpoints all enhance the uncertainty and lack of personal purpose of a person caught in a group identity that he finds unexciting, but from which he is unable to break away completely. The protagonists are all trying to discover why they possess shutaisei ni kakeru, lack of identity, and trying to cultivate the emergent identities their searches produce. As it stands in Murakami’s fictional worlds, a person is either part of the communal mindset, or he stands on the fringes of society.

People are influenced by the communal identity found within the structure of Japan’s corporate and social environment. The drive towards economic progress centrally controlled by the government is accompanied by a massive consumerism and an increasing tendency in the Japanese people to look towards the West as an example for
modernity. The harried pace and low quality of life becomes subordinate to the demands of a goal oriented work force. Individuals are defined by what advertised goods they possess. Japanese critic Masao Miyoshi feels that the myth of an isolated Japan was destroyed during this period of economic growth by the country’s “single-minded devotion to mass production and consumerism” (Miyoshi 27). Japan as a nation has become a member of a globalized capitalist alliance causing Japanese cultural life to be infused with international mass phenomena (27). Murakami’s novels illustrate the permeation of Western culture through the language and pop references used throughout. A reading of Murakami’s novels imparts an acceptance of the encroachment of Western culture in everyday Japanese life through the protagonists’ easy and frequent use of these imports.

As a consequence of this period in Japan’s history, I surmise that individuals are reacting to the communal models in a variety of ways. Murakami’s characters serve as examples of the effects conformism and resistance have on individuals and illustrate what can happen when the individual does neither. Rat in A Wild Sheep Chase is one character who spent his life living on the fringes, while the unnamed protagonist “I”, or Boku³, tried unsuccessfully to live up to society’s expectations. Boku had the wife, career track and stability of a corporate lifestyle, but he ends up divorced and bought out of his business. He realizes that when he had the corporate lifestyle he had not been happy -he just existed. Many Japanese, like his friend Rat, decide to reject the corporate lifestyle and live on the fringes of society. The Japanese have a term for these people; they call them freeters.
A freeter moves from town to town, working odd jobs to pay for room and board. A freeter also moves from one relationship to another (Millett np). Boku realizes that Rat was not any happier living outside of society than he was living in it. Rat became a freeter because he feared the weaknesses within himself. He believed that he lived on the edge to escape the feeling that “there’s this something inside you that’s rotting away and you feel it all along” (Murakami, Sheep 282). Rat’s feelings of internal deterioration originate in trying to fit into the corporate “system” in which his father excelled. He found weakness existed in many different forms: moral, consciousness, and the very fabric of existence itself. By traveling alone, Rat keeps his weaknesses from causing problems for the other people in his life. The freeter phenomenon, illustrated by Rat, is romanticized by popular culture in literature and film as a result of Japanese youths’ attempts to create new ways of coping with Japan’s modernity. The novel strives to discover a way for an individual to exist as an autonomous self without feeling rejected by or rejecting society. Murakami is searching for a way in which the Japanese can move away from an imposed sense of identity to an identity that they have created for themselves through life’s various lessons. Ultimately, I hope to uncover here a sense of coherence in Murakami’s detective novels that stems from a recurring stylistic method and consistent effort to suggest new forms of living out Japanese cultural identity in postmodern, globalized terms.

As I suggested above, it is my contention that Murakami, in his novels, A Wild Sheep Chase, Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World, and Dance Dance Dance, uses magic realism to portray a dichotomy between fantastic and empirical reality.
as a means to recover individual or personal identity, rather than a communal one. The connection created between the fantastic and empirical constructed through magic realism within the detective genre is an attempt to assert individuality against a hostile corporate backdrop. Murakami begins his exploration of the struggle between individualism and the idea of corporate assimilation in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. In this novel he investigates the social and political consequences of conformity and the personal repercussions involved with nonconformity. Murakami then internalizes the struggle for individuality in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. The novel works as a representation of the split between subconscious and conscious perceptions of reality. The alternating perspectives on reality explore the psychological aspects of existing in a postmodern environment while trying to separate individual identity, represented by the conscious, from the communal identity of a late capitalist culture, represented by the subconscious. Murakami in *Dance Dance Dance* concludes the search for personal identity begun in the first two novels. In the novel, the protagonist, after being led through both empirical and fantastic influences, is able to find happiness by re-anchoring his individual self to reality on his own terms.

This study will explore how Murakami works through the conflict between individualism and corporate identity in modern Japan. Murakami’s narratives illuminate the individual’s struggle in resisting the pull of societal expectations and the advent of self doubt prevalent in post war Japan concerning job security, economic growth, and group dynamics through the juxtaposition of empirical reality with imagined reality. The
principle works to be discussed are Murakami’s novels in translation—*A Wild Sheep Chase, Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, and *Dance Dance Dance*.

The introductory portion of my study will begin by examining the various trends among Murakami criticism: his status as a postmodern writer, the debate regarding his works’ status as “high” or “low” literature, and his categorization as a Japanese national writer. Murakami’s classification as a postmodern writer is central to my argument that there are social and political consequences involved with the struggle for individual identity. The postmodern condition as defined by French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard focuses on issues of power surrounding the appropriation of information. The commodification of knowledge creates a scenario for nation-states to fight for informational control much as territory was fought over in the past. The struggle for the power/knowledge would influence political actions as well as private corporate actions leaving the individual at odds with both sectors of society (Lyotard 5). I further argue that the thematic content of the three detective novels in this study offers a variation on the formula of finding individual freedom within narrative and socio-political constraints, placing Murakami’s novels within the realm of “high” literature. It is at this point that I draw upon historical scholarship on Japanese literary tradition to demonstrate the vastness of the cultural literary basis of Murakami’s work. In conclusion, I contend that Murakami’s position as a national writer is, paradoxically, established by his globalization, and his global stature is not an erasure of Japanese culture.

Following the section on critical reception the study then shifts to methodology. In this section I explain how I draw on sociological and psychological approaches to
literary production utilizing new historicist, Marxist, and psychoanalytic literary theory. Sociological background is necessary to understand how *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, and *Dance Dance Dance*, all demonstrate the contemporary conflict in Japan between individual and communal identity. I then turn to consider the primary technique that I examine in Murakami’s writing, magic realism. I maintain that this is the main narrative tool with which he strives to articulate a nascent, struggling individualism. The study then looks toward the detective genre as Murakami’s balance for the disruptiveness which magic realist prose creates. Through the detective genre he is able to retain coherence in the struggle for identity when his narrative threatens to deviate from the expected.

The remainder of the study traces Murakami’s theme of developing an individual self against a hostile corporate backdrop through each of the three novels. The theme exhibits a developmental arc that begins in *A Wild Sheep Chase* and concludes in *Dance Dance Dance* demonstrating Murakami’s view on the steps involved with the process of recovering an individual sense of self. The central concept concerning the individual’s psychological journey towards this recovery in *A Wild Sheep Chase* is the birth of the struggle. The genesis of the individual’s struggle for self is demonstrated in the novel by the protagonist’s awakening self awareness. He is led towards the conclusion that he must nurture his awareness through the events he experiences, and the political understanding he gains through his relationship with the Secretary. The revelations of his friend Rat tear the narrator out of his apathetic existence, and in the end he resolves to resist a return to his previous state.
The thematic thread of individualism is picked up in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. Here, the development of the individual’s struggle for identity is explored as an internal, psychological process. The narrator exists in two abutting worlds, one empirical and one fantastic, in which he is manipulated by the social system. He responds to the societal expectations of each world by internalizing the search for his identity. The form internalization takes is in the narrator’s search throughout his own knowledge and memories for the answers to who he is. He begins to pull away from the need to look toward society for the answers. The corresponding events in both worlds lead the narrator to define what is important to him as an individual, and what his responsibility is to himself and his place in society once making that conclusion. The conclusion leaves the narrator excluded from both worlds where he can best discover what his personal identity is.

The thematic arc establishing the stages pertaining to the individual’s struggle for personal identity finds resolution in Murakami’s *Dance Dance Dance*. In this novel the reader is reunited with the narrator from *A Wild Sheep Chase*. The protagonist leaves the isolation that he has built around himself and begins to connect with individuals in society around him. Through these connections he is able to reestablish his own personal identity. He lets go of the preconceived notions of identity that he learned in his youth, and releases them. Letting go of these expectations liberates him from his position of ambiguity and he realizes that he does not have to accept existence on either a communal level or a personal level only. The knowledge that the narrator gains allows him to exist
as an individual identity within his cultural society. Murakami's thematic closure suggests that the Japanese people do not have to sacrifice associations with society to actualize individual identity in a society structured by traditional communal values.

Critical Reception

There are three major threads of critical theory surrounding Murakami's body of work. The main trends throughout these threads concern debates involving his status as a postmodern writer, the classification of his work as "high" or "low" literature, and whether he should be considered a national writer. The first trend in Murakami criticism, which also informs the other two, revolves around his status as a postmodern writer. Both his uses of stylistic elements recurrent in postmodernism, and his own position as a prominent figure in postmodern Japan, are crucial in determining the relevance Murakami's thematic study on the struggle for individual identity has to current socio-political concerns. Murakami is able to unite the literary style of the detective genre and magic realism through the components of postmodern writing.

The concept of postmodernism is amorphous, creating debates about the meaning of the term. A good definition by James Morley of the elements inherent in postmodernism by is provided by The Electronic Labyrinth stating that "collage, diversity, the mystically unrepresentable" are stressed in postmodernism along with, "most importantly...the dissolution of distinctions, the merging of subject and object, self
and other. This is a sarcastic playful parody of western modernity and the ‘John Wayne’ individual and a radical, anarchist rejection of all attempts to define, reify or re-present the human subject (Keep np).” Postmodernism as such is an attempt to understand the complex social issues present in an increasingly technological world. Murakami’s appropriation of the characteristics inherent in the above definition of postmodernism situates him firmly within this literary style. The world represented by “The Boss” and the mystical sheep in A Wild Sheep Chase literally embody the rejection of an autonomous individual. The sheep’s ultimate plan, consisting of creating anarchy through the destruction of diversity, clearly pits the hero against a postmodern conglomerate.

Yoshio Iwamoto, in his essay “A Voice from Postmodern Japan: Haruki Murakami,” breaks Japanese postmodernism down into easily defined characteristics. The first aspect he discusses is the individual’s attempt to form identity from the acquisition of brand name consumer goods (295). Murakami illustrates the obsession with blatant consumerism through his constant references to brand names and Western commodities. Iwamoto then goes on to cite Japanese critic Kojin Karatani’s theory that postmodernism is easily accepted in Japan because elements related to the concept such as “hostility toward a logocentric system” were already present in the culture of premodern Japan (“Voice” 295).

The remaining aspects of Iwamoto’s definition of postmodernism concern various ways postmodern writers work with narrative format. One of the most notable examples is the blurring of boundaries, between elite and popular genres, and literary conventions.
(Iwamoto, "Voice" 295). Murakami blends genre boundaries by combining detective and fantasy fiction in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. His fusion of magic realism with the hard-boiled blurs the distinctions between the genres. Iwamoto’s next criterion emphasizes the lack of boundaries in postmodern writing. He states that another aspect of postmodernism is a de-emphasis on plot. All three novels take their readers in unexpected directions because Murakami is not obligated to continue in only one direction. The emphasis is not on cause and effect, but on the underlying themes. How the protagonist resolves the investigation is not as important as what he learns through the process.

The most intriguing aspect of postmodernism is what Iwamoto calls “a delight in playful rhetoric” ("Voice" 295). Murakami has fun with this when the limo driver and Boku in *A Wild Sheep Chase* debate the importance of names. When the driver discovers that Boku’s cat does not have a name the two men get into a discussion about the importance of names and why some objects are named and some are not. The two men and Boku’s girlfriend then have a serious discussion about what would happen if city buses had names. The irony in the discussion is that none of the characters present have names. They are simply Boku, the limo driver, and the girl with the beautiful ears. Another example of Murakami’s playful rhetoric is illustrated by the conversation between the limo driver and Boku about God. Boku asks the limo driver how he reconciles being a Christian with working for a right-wing figure and the driver replies that “the Boss is an honorable man. After the Lord, the most godly person I’ve ever met” (Murakami, *Sheep*, 127). In answer to Boku’s question, if the driver had met God, he
continues with “Certainly. I telephone Him every night” (127). Boku comes to find out that the limo driver received God’s telephone number from “the Boss.” The reader is thus made aware of important issues through the presence of irony, humor, and satire abounding in the text. All of these characteristics viewed as a whole combine to form the basis of Murakami’s postmodern style.

Another, related critique resulting from Murakami’s use of postmodernist concepts is that his work appears to have no substance, that it is formula fiction. Murakami does work within the detective genre, but his minimal dialogue and international flair are not the result of formulaic fiction. In formula fiction the plot is predictable and the characters follow the anticipated behaviors set up by the particular form. Murakami, in his detective novels, “experiments with language, genre, realism, and fantasy, in order to explore the outer limits of postmodern expression” (Strecher, “Beyond” 356). His meticulous use of formula allows Murakami to create texts which appear to be formulaic, but are instead distinctly postmodern in character. In other words, he appears to be following the predicted path of the detective formula, but then through the use of magic realism the plot turns into something entirely unexpected. A closer look at his detective novels shows that they indeed have substance. Underneath the apparent hard-boiled plot resides a quintessential picture of the Japanese struggle for individuality in a corporate environment.

Murakami’s inventive adaptations of the detective genre in A Wild Sheep Chase, Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World, and Dance Dance Dance are prime examples of postmodernism and can be understood in light of the structuralist arguments
of the 1960s and 1970s, and then 1980s postmodern theorists, concerning the debate over what is considered popular literature and what is considered pure or serious literature. Although structuralism is quite varied examining structure at many levels, the structuralist theorists of the 1960's and 1970's placed the significance of writing largely on the system of organization. The significance of the above novels from a structuralist point of view would be on the detective form, not Murakami's manipulation of the form. Postmodern theorists use a pastiche of techniques and genres to subvert the distinction between high and low literature. Postmodern writing challenges traditional values. Murakami does this by creating multiple viable realities wherein the plot does not remain in the conventions of the typical detective novel. The argument among one faction of structuralists that all writing "lies on a continuum between what is conventional and what is inventive" is dismissed by postmodernism because the postmodern text contains elements of both high and low literature (Strecher, "Beyond" 354). The continuum, even though rejected, is the stepping stone which allows the idea of a text containing elements of both to exist.

Murakami's disregard for the rigid categories within which Japanese writing has traditionally been contained illustrates the postmodern adherence to dispersal and decentering. Viewing A Wild Sheep Chase, Dance Dance Dance, and Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World through their "elements of fantasy, mystery, adventure, and detective story, all presented with suspense and humor in a smooth, sophisticated style" would make it mistakenly appear as if they were more in line with "popular" literature than traditional form (Iwamoto, "Voice" 296). However, a closer
look reveals that Murakami’s work contains elements of "pure" literature to be taken seriously by critics. For example, *A Wild Sheep Chase* demonstrates a concern about the "human condition in the contemporary world" an element that places the novel within the realm of pure literature (Iwamoto, "Voice" 296). The debate between high and low literature in the West has abated more than in Japanese literary studies where the belief that pure literature is no longer concretely defined is slow to emerge. Japanese scholars whose literary tastes were formed by modernist writers such as Kawabat, Tanizaki, Mishima and Ōe, are loathe to praise writers who are not these modernist icons who present the reader with a cherished image of Japan which is no longer relevant to contemporary society (Strecher, "Beyond" 373). Japanese postmodern writers such as Murakami, Yasuo Tanaka, and Banana Yoshimoto are not rejecting Japanese tradition; they are simply trying to diffuse meaning in a vastly changing cultural atmosphere (Iwamoto, "Dance" 889). They apply aspects of postmodernism’s fragmented style to incorporate the rhetorical playfulness, satirical representation, and de-emphasis on plot that this method allows in order to relate to a modern literary audience.

Like so many postmodern writers, Murakami’s style creates ambiguities such as whether or not his work can be considered "pure" or "popular" literature as noted above, and whether he is representational of Japan and should be considered a national author. The main debate among the contemporary literati in Japan centers on the question of "pure" literature. The controversy among critics in their evaluations of Murakami’s work evolves from Murakami’s postmodernist approach to prose alongside his style, which uses simplistic writing to convey complicated themes. His stripped-down use of
language has garnered criticism from writers such as Kenzaburo Oe, who has said disparagingly that Murakami writes “shimin shōsetsu” or stories about average citizens (Matsuoka 434). However, the humiliation of an average person in an ordinary life is becoming an increasingly depicted theme in contemporary Japanese writing. Along with personal changes, such as a rising divorce rate, there is a growing dissatisfaction with the corporate lifestyle depicting a change in personal and professional needs. Both of these situations influence contemporary literature. This increase in interest in the ordinary person gives Murakami’s works a relevance to contemporary readers that makes him one of the best selling authors in Japan.

Another issue informed by the “pure” verses “popular” literature debate raised by critics is the problem of national culture. Accused of being un-Japanese, Murakami faces the question of what forms national identity. Is it an unmoving fixture or an ever changing entity? The rapid economic growth of Japan in the decades following WWII led to a generation of Japanese who are dependent upon consumption. Fascination with European and American brand names created an exploding market for Western goods in the 1970s and 1980s in Japan. Then starting in the 1990s, and continuing now, the economic stability of Japan has begun to implode. No longer in a state of economic growth, the Japanese populace has to revise its values. They are increasingly self-examining and introspective. This is leading to a questioning of the values imposed on them by the older generations (Pulvers 38). Consequently, they have begun to analyze their learned behavior not to question the injustices placed upon them at school, and in
the workplace. These societal changes cannot help but be expressed in the writings of contemporary novelists.

The shift in focus of Japanese literature from traditional forms towards more socially relevant subjects does not mean an abandonment of Japanese literary history. Instead, the shift represents the growth of Japan’s literature. Despite the criticisms leveled by those such as Kenzaburo Oe, who feels that Murakami is abandoning or slighting traditional Japanese literature, the representation of ordinary men in Murakami’s writing is not a departure from classical Japanese writing. The moralistic Kanazoski tales of the Edo period were based on ordinary men faced with the moral dilemmas prevalent in any society. The war tales told in the Gunkimono form were full of the exploits of the average soldier, not just the military elite. The Ninjōbon love stories often portrayed ordinary individuals struggling with the difficulties of finding true love. All of these classical forms pay homage to the courage and intelligence of the ordinary individual just as Murakami’s A Wild Sheep Chase, Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World, and Dance Dance Dance do. Murakami’s exploration of the ordinary man does not disqualify these novels from being considered “pure” literature in the Japanese tradition.

Considering the changing climate of Japan’s literary scene, critics such as Jay Rubin do not see this trend in Murakami’s work as un-Japanese. Rubin does not hold Murakami’s popularity against him because many classical Japanese writers were popular themselves during their lifetimes. To Rubin popularity does not disqualify literature from being “pure” literature. Furthermore, Rubin believes Murakami’s popularity is in
keeping with classical Japanese literature by explaining that “Murakami’s explorations of the human psyche in 1990s terms are as valid as Soseki’s were in his day” (Rubin 497). He also goes on to say that “there are enough dollops of old-fashioned sentiment in his works to satisfy the most traditionalist Japanese I-novelist, and the portrait of the lonely protagonist can be traced back to the alienated modern young heroes of the Meiji period (1868-1912) who so excited the young readers of that time”(Rubin 499).

Murakami remains deeply immersed in Japanese literary history, despite his modernized eclectic style. To appreciate more fully the extent to which this is true, I want to offer now a brief overview of this history. Modern Japanese literature is derived from a tradition over one thousand years old. The early development of Japanese literature was influenced by three distinct sociological factors. The first significant influence on Japanese literature is the homogeneity associated with being an island nation. The poems and Shinto prose prayers developed between the Archaic period, pre 700 AD, and the Nara period, or eighth century, were almost exclusively the product of an indigenous culture. The people created songs to relate historical events. The isolation of being an island nation meant that the poets and storytellers of this period had to rely on their own inventiveness (Clark 211). Then in the Nara period writing was introduced to Japan from Korea. The newly introduced writing in Japan created simplistic poems that illustrate the Japanese process of adapting foreign art forms to their own ends. Gradually however, the works were influenced by a second significant factor in Japanese literature, a growing adaptation of the literary forms of China. Chinese law, arithmetic and classics were studied in Japan among the ruling class during the Nara period. The poetical forms
of China were copied by Japanese poets. Japanese authors had no compunctions about adapting Chinese art forms and modifying them to please their Japanese audience.

The third and perhaps most pervasive influence on Japanese early literature was the introduction of Buddhism to Japan from China (Ashton 6). Buddhism changed not only Japan's literature, but also the art and architecture. The practitioners of Buddhism required pagodas and temples of a stately nature for their meditations. The architectural style for the temples was then adopted for the palaces of the court. Artisans began creating bronze statues of Buddha as well as wooden carvings for the temples. Teachers were brought over from China to teach medicine, glyphic art, painting and architecture. The Buddhist beliefs known as the Four Noble Truths pervasively found ways into the poetry and stories of the period. A great concern with the interconnectedness of everything in the physical world with the spiritual world saw a rise in the use of nature in Japanese poetry and stories related tales about the power of the mind and the wisdom of Buddha (Mitchell 4-6).

It is in the Heian period, which lasted from 794-1185, that literature began gaining momentum. Almost all writing was by the aristocratic class, who favored waka verse, a 31 syllable poetic form. Aristocratic poetry gradually gave way to the flowering of the prose romance, many of which took the form of diaries. The privatized diary form itself reflected the restricted arena of court life and its adoption was a result of the writers, critics, and audiences all belonging to aristocratic court life. However, towards the Late-Heian era "the rise of the provincial and military classes, the fading of court power and the growing influence of Buddhism during the twelfth century had a marked
effect both on the forms of fiction and on prose style itself” (Harries 113). The audience for literature was widening and increasingly secular and collections were appearing with a strong Buddhist influence that led to more entertaining and anecdotal writing similar in form to fables. The Buddhist writings were not edicts on how a person was to behave, but rather suggestions on how a person could release the need for worldly pleasure in order to escape suffering. Buddhist society views virtue not in the abstract, but in how a person reacts in moral situations. The literature of the Late-Heian era reflected the changing attitudes of the people. Buddhist fables were not the only writings to change during this time. The diary form of the prose romance began to reflect a more intellectual and socially changing age (Mitchell 125-127).

The creation of the Gunkimono, war tale, carried fiction to new heights. These were especially popular with the newly dominant warrior class. The tales were usually told orally by wandering priests because of the expense involved with writing the tales down. This was true for courtly literature as well, “thus all fiction up to the seventeenth century tended to contain a strong oral element” (Harries 116). The war torn fourteenth century inspired the tales of many Gunkimono writers, but as the period advanced the war novel began to lose its momentum. The long tales turned to short stories that encompassed Buddhist fables, folk tales, and fairy tales alongside military exploits. The short stories produced in this waning period are more important as historical bridges to the Edo period than as literary achievements in their own right.

The Edo period, 1603-1867, arose from the upheaval of the Middle Ages. New social strata created by centuries of conflict contained the elements of a wider audience
Peace and political stability beginning around 1600 left the educated samurai free to turn to the arts and commerce. The addition of an increasingly prosperous urban population led to a reading class larger and more diverse than the previous era’s. The utilization of printing opened up literature to an economic advancement. These sorts of social changes along with a wider audience created an influx of new subject matter. The Kanazoski, short books written in Kana', covered a spectrum of topics many of which had religious, educational or moralistic themes. Considered the earliest prose works of the Edo period, the Kanazoski often reflected the worldly interests of the individual writers taking the forms of the romance, history, and miscellaneous essays (Harries 118).

The end of the eighteenth century saw further changes in Japanese literature. The most pronounced was the movement of literature towards the average person, not the literary elite. The tales were of ordinary people and written in a simpler language. The Ninjōbon, love stories, of the Edo period come the closest to our contemporary Western concept of a novel. These stories were extremely popular “because they were written for ordinary men and women and required no specialized knowledge to be enjoyed. Language while classical and literary in parts was full of colloquial dialogue and easily understood” (Harries 124).

Towards the Meiji Era, 1868-1912, political themes became more prominent showing that fiction could address serious issues. The affects of the Russo-Japanese war led Japanese society to question modernization and its social cost. This was also a time when Japan was opening up to the West. Following the Russo-Japanese war, ending in
1905, European naturalism began to influence Japanese literature. Although Japanese writers were influenced by French writers such as Maupassant, their usage of naturalism was distinctly different from European naturalism. The European emphasis on "precise, objective observations and portrayal of the social environment and determinants of character and behavior" rapidly became an obsessive absorption with the self when adapted by Japanese authors (Harries 126). This adaptation of naturalism is an extension of the traditional emphasis on autobiographical forms in diaries and confessional literature in Japan. Meiji era authors were faced with economic, spiritual, intellectual, and social problems that came with the influence of Western culture. The novel for Meiji era writers became more a means of finding new ways to live rather than a means of representing life (Rimer 68).

Contemporary Japanese writers may have moved away from the classical forms of early Japanese literature, but their works are heavily influenced by both the Edo and the Meiji eras. Haruki Murakami is no exception. Although Murakami rebelled against his father's classical training, his work does not shun his literary past. Instead, he borrows from tradition creating a style that is comfortable for him and his audience. His novels closely resemble the Ninjōbon of the Edo era in his use of simple language and emphasis on the ordinary man's quest for personal identity. His work is highly accessible through his use of pop references, yet they contain a sophistication showing his knowledge of literary language and genre. His mixture of the fantastic with reality is reminiscent of the fairy tales of the fourteenth century. This mixture of contemporary
and traditional narrative allows him to be easily accessible to non-Japanese readers, while still keeping with his national past.

The need to express contemporary culture has initiated the move of Murakami and other contemporary authors away from the *shishōsetsu*, also called the I-novel, which has been the most prominent form of Japanese literature since the Japanese adopted European naturalism one hundred years ago. As noted above, naturalist writing, once adopted by contemporary writers, very quickly turned into the confessional novel form. The narrow confines of the confessional *shishōsetsu* disallowed social or political commitment in fiction. As modern writers move away from this form and embrace postmodern forms of writing, they are opening Japanese literature up to the European practice of including the politics and ideas of the times into their writings on a much larger scope than in previous periods (Pulvers 39). The current practice among Japanese writers to tackle contemporary issues does not discount their vast literary heritage.

Japan’s contemporary authors are influenced by their country’s vast literary history combined with the changing social concerns of the 20th century. Consequently, the sociological aspect of Japan’s contemporary literature is garnering the attention of more than literary critics. The country’s literature is studied by cultural anthropologists, historians, and journalists alongside its literary critics in order to learn more about Japan as a nation. Critics from these other disciplines, such as Aoki Tamotsu and Kawamoto Saburo are interested in human society, not “high” art. Because Murakami’s writing is highly accessible to the Japanese mass audience and contains relevant social, political, and economic themes, scholars such as Strecher, Norihiro, Kazuhiro, Yoko and Rubin are
studying him on a more serious level. His characters and plots serve as templates for a changing Japan, one in which the contemporary climate in corporate or urban Japan is moving away from group socialization. Murakami's work continues to evaluate the tension between the Japanese state and individualism.

The tension caused in a communal culture, such as Japan's, creates an identity crisis among its populace. Murakami's characters illustrate this conflict through the fragmented identities that they are trying to repair. Childers states that fragmentation "can be used to exercise power over people by emphasizing the increasing alienation of the individual and the ultimate futility of any sort of attempted unity or totality" (117). Therefore, I read the protagonists' fragmented selves as a result of the hostile corporate system. They are alienated from society by their unwillingness to be part of the communal whole. However, Murakami stresses the possibility of achieving individualism in his novels, instead of the futility of trying.

Murakami's rejection of pure literature and concentration on creating stories to entertain and reach readers on a more cognitive level has raised his work in the estimation of professional critics such as Kuroko Kazuo and Kato Norihiro. These contemporary critics argue that Murakami expresses his generation. Kazuo admits that Murakami's first two novels seemed lacking in social commitment, but that his later works are relevant not only socially, but also politically. Stephen Snyder approaches Murakami's work without asking what makes serious literature, but rather asking whether or not his work may be taken seriously. Snyder's main complaint with Murakami's writing is that he does not "engage and interrogate the past with greater critical focus"
(Strecher, "Beyond" 374). He does appreciate Murakami's use of memory to investigate an imagined future, rather than to recover an irrecoverable past. Despite the controversial views among critics, book length studies of Murakami's work are published every year proving that there is something in his work worth a second glance. The literary public takes notice of the new writing he produces bringing "postmodern literature into the forefront of critical thinking in contemporary Japan" (Strecher, "Beyond" 374).

Methodology

The methods with which I approach Murakami's novels are a combination of new historicism, psychoanalytic criticism, and Marxist criticism. The aspect of new historicism I use in viewing Murakami's work I develop from the concept that man is a construct of social and political codes. Joseph Childers argues that a person's subjectification is a result of historical and social circumstances (235). I apply Childers' definition of man's subjectification to the Japanese communal identity opposed in Murakami's three novels. The idea that complete objectivity cannot exist results from the protagonists' positions within Japanese society. They are products of the social, political and educational influences of their culture. The search for individual identity cannot completely separate the protagonists from society. Once they recover their individual identities they remain a part of the system; the difference is in how they perceive their roles within the communal system. While new historicism allows me to view the
struggle for individual identity from a sociological stance, psychoanalytic theory allows me to view the consequences on the human psyche created from this struggle.

When reading Murakami I borrow elements from psychoanalytic criticism to explore the protagonist’s search for individuality within the communal society. French theorist Jacques Lacan’s concepts on the relationship between the individual subject and the larger cultural structure inform my reading of Murakami’s detective novels. I view the protagonist’s struggles between his own moral code and the disintegration of cultural values in the corporate community through Lacan’s theory of self-conceptualization elaborated in “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience.” In Lacan’s essay, he asserts that the end of the “mirror stage,” his theory on the formation of identity or self-conceptualization, results in turning “the whole of human knowledge into mediatization through the desire of the other” (Lacan 408). In Lacan’s theory, people become permanently linked to social situations. These connections to society create the tension between the protagonists of Murakami’s novels and the communal atmosphere of Japanese corporate life. However, Freud’s theory of the unconscious is the basis of my conclusions on Murakami’s use of magic realism as a bridge for the emergence of repressed knowledge to move from the unconscious to the conscious mind. In Freud’s theory, located in An Outline of Psycho-Analysis, the mind represses knowledge in the unconscious that is only retrievable to the conscious mind through alternate forms such as dreams (Freud 32-34). I suggest that magic realism for Murakami operates in a way analogous to Freudian dreamwork because it allows Murakami’s protagonists a means to access their unconscious minds.
Through the elements of magic realism, a bridge is formed between the unconscious and the conscious of the protagonists. I turn to C.G. Jung and his theories of a collective unconscious to understand the archetypal images presented in Murakami's novels. "The Shadow," an essay from *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self* allows me to associate the Shadow character in Murakami's *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* with the tensions created between unconscious, personal and conscious, social identity.

Whereas psychoanalytic concepts help when reading Murakami to understand the struggle from the individual's perspective, the historical and social influences on the unconscious are conceptualized through Marxism. The principle inherent in marxist philosophy that material and social conditions produce a text enables me to view Murakami's work from a sociological stance to uncover the political implications of his novels. For example, the references to the student movements in the 1960s illustrate the social unrest of individuals opposing the corporate state. The sheep in *A Wild Sheep Chase* is created as a result of a political agenda based on consumerism, both of these instances are examples of reflectionism, or vulgar marxism. Yet, Murakami's explorations on the theme of personal identity, seen through the marxist perception that all writing is political and can bring about social and political change, firmly present Murakami as a serious writer whose work is capable of social revolution. My use of these literary theories creates a lens for viewing Murakami's novels through the literary conventions that he employs. I examine his adaptations of magic realism and the detective genre through each literary device.
When approaching Murakami’s work, it is advantageous to have an understanding of his use of magic realism and knowledge of magic realism in its various forms. Magical realism is a term first used by art critic Franz Roh as a way to emphasize the idea that mystery hides and pulsates behind the represented world rather than in it (Leal 120). Wendy Faris argues that magic realism is a key component of not only postmodernism, but also of international narrative. In her essay, “Scheherazade’s Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction,” Faris cites Isabel Allende’s view that magic realism is a “literary device or a way of seeing in which there is space for the invisible forces that move the world: dreams, legends, myths, emotion, passion, history. All of these forces find a place in the absurd, unexplainable aspects of magical realism” (Faris 187-188). However, many scholars follow Alejo Carpentier’s claim that magic realism is a specifically Latin American literary form. For Carpentier, magic realism expresses the notion that the juxtapositions and absurdities inherent in this form are a direct result of the specific history, geography, and politics of Latin America (Carpentier 83-85).

In contrast to Carpentier, Angel Flores argues that magic realism is not space specific (268). Instead, Flores views magic realism as a result of wide-ranging post-colonial dynamics, which may take in certain aspects of post war Japan. Magic realism of this type is viewed as a rejection of “traditional Euro-American emphasis on realism and positivism” (Strecher, “Magical” 268).

Most relevant, perhaps, to a reading of Murakami’s novels is the concept presented by critics such as Luis Leal and Wendy Faris of magic realism as a world view. Leal describes the theory by explaining that “magical realism is, more than anything else,
an attitude toward reality that can be expressed in popular or cultured forms, in elaborate or rustic styles, in closed or open structures [. . .] In magical realism the writer confronts reality and tries to untangle it, to discover what is mysterious in things, in life, in human acts” (Leal 120). The freedom of this definition to combine different elements of magic realism is apparent in Murakami’s prose. He combines the Western influences of post-colonial magic realism with the basic tenet of creating a literary space in which the marvelous can coexist with the real to create a more internationalized form of magic realism. Murakami’s alternate realities, ghosts and hybrid characters illustrate his willingness to mix elements to incorporate into his narrative style. The main narrative tool for mapping the individual quest for personal identity apparent in a reading of Murakami’s detective novels is drawn from a pastiche of aspects available in magic realist prose.

Before outlining the primary aspects of magic realism and their relation to Murakami’s detective novels, I feel it is important to stress how other critics view this aspect of his work. Critics such as Matthew Strecher and Susan J. Napier examine Murakami’s treatment of magic realism in their critiques of his work. Strecher believes that Murakami’s use of magic realism within most of his novels is a tool to permit the convergence of characters “who have become only memories” with “memories that reemerge from the mind to become new characters again,” a blending of the conscious with the unconscious (Strecher, “Magical” 268). He sees the quest for identity as linked to Murakami’s use of magic realism, but does not believe that it is related with identity affirmation. He does not see the search for an individualized sense of self as a rejection
of national identity, but as a means of looking for a person’s core identity and learning why an individual becomes a “part of the ‘system’ of Japanese society, or, alternatively, to fall through the cracks” (Strecher, “Magical” 269-271). Strecher refers to the Lacanian concept of self to synthesize the linguistic connections between the conscious and the unconscious in the magic realism of Murakami’s works. Self construction is enhanced by the tangible, magically real connections formed through narrative links between the conscious and the unconscious, such as the black box in *Hard Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* and the alternately existing sixteenth floor in *Dance Dance Dance* (Strecher, “Magical” 270-272). It is in probing the inner mind that Strecher believes Murakami’s protagonists can ultimately find their identities.

Literary critic Susan J. Napier believes that the search for identity is a major theme amongst Japanese authors. This is due to the identity crisis of Japan “vis-à-vis the West and modernity” following the opening up of Japan during the Meiji Restoration in 1868 (Napier 452). The surreal nature of magic realism enables authors to explore connections between the past and the present, the real with the unreal and inner-consciousness with reality. She believes that Murakami’s works are exceedingly good examples of magic realism in contemporary Japanese literature. She compliments his juxtaposition of an urban landscape with the marvelous and uncanny. Napier believes that Murakami’s use of magic realism in *A Wild Sheep Chase* is used to privilege a “rural and marginalized Japanese past” (Napier 473). She claims that Murakami uses magic realism to uncover the past. For example, the sheep in *A Wild Sheep Chase* is “an amusing but sinister image” used to convey the “burden of the past that is impossible to
escape" (Napier 473). What Napier is saying here is that the reader is forced to focus on aspects of Japanese History previously overlooked in an original and provocative way through Boku’s search for the sheep. Murakami uses the magic realist techniques explained below to connect the phantom sheep with Japan’s history as well as the problems facing modern Japanese culture.

Wendy Faris outlines the five primary aspects of a universal or international magic realism in her previously mentioned essay. The first element that she attributes to magic realism is the presence of an irreducible element of magic (Faris 167). Murakami’s three novels contain magical elements that cannot be explained by rational, empirical knowledge that we have about the physical laws of reality. The second trait of magic realism is that the story must contain descriptions and “detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world- this is the realism in magical realism, distinguishing it from much fantasy and allegory” (Faris 169). Faris allows that the descriptive nature can appear in two forms both of which are utilized by Murakami: the creation of a fictional world, and through historical reference. The third aspect of magic realism that Faris points out is the possibility that the reader may hesitate between two contradictory understandings of events creating confusions and doubts in the reader about what is real. The reader has to allow for the possibility of the magical to exist because evidence is not present to prove otherwise. The fourth element of magic realism is that the reader experiences a near-merging of two worlds and that the “magical realist vision exists at the intersection of two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions” (Faris 172). Faris’ final criterion for magic realism is that the texts question
conventional ideas about time, space, and identity. Murakami combines elements from all five characteristics of magic realism to experiment with inner and outer space in the construction of identity outside accepted social definitions.

It is within the popular form of the detective genre that Murakami’s magic realism takes on the significance of creating an alternate space in which the detective can gain knowledge not apparent inside of empirical reality. The character in a hard-boiled detective story works the way through his investigation using empirical data and intuitive hunches. Murakami’s application of this form allows him to utilize magic realism to guide the detective’s hunches. In *A Wild Sheep Chase* many of the breaks the protagonists gets in solving the case come from following the intuition of the girl with the beautiful ears, who is influenced by the elusive sheep. Instead of the detective’s hunches coming from within him they are arranged by magical forces that seem outside of his control. Contrarily, the magical forces through the aspects of magic realist prose are created by the detective himself and exist within him the entire time.

In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, Murakami uses magic realism to create a second realm of reality in which the protagonist has to gain clues to his past through reading unicorn skulls. The protagonist in the *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* narrative is helped along in his search for answers by the Doctor whose laboratory exists in a subterranean world full of monsters. Magic realism allows Murakami to lead the investigation in directions that otherwise would not be possible or plausible. The acceptance of the existence of subterranean monsters, sheep men, ghosts and alternate realms is important to represent allegorically the struggle for individual self. The magic
realism in the detective narratives allows the reader to accept without hesitation the probabilities that are presented which allow the hero to solve the case. The probability of the detective plot is important to keep the reader focused on the narrative theme, not on questioning the reality it presents. In keeping with the believability of the text, *Dance Dance Dance* is the only one of the three detective novels that has a traditional murder to solve. The protagonist is drawn to the case because he keeps dreaming of KiKi, the girl with the beautiful ears. The creation of a floor in the Dolphin hotel that only a few people can enter and the revelations of the Sheep Man are there to help the protagonist not only figure out the crime, but to understand the motive.

As a result of Murakami’s familiarity with early modern American literature and his fascination with hard-boiled detective writers such as Chandler, his use of the detective genre is that of the hard-boiled detective narrative, a prominent style of the 1930s. Heta Pyrhonen, author of *Murder from an Academic Angle: An Introduction to the Study of the Detective Narrative*, describes hard-boiled narratives as depicting “the lonely battle of a private detective against criminal forces infesting those structures that ought to uphold society, emphasizing the heroism, perseverance, and moral choices of its protagonist in the face of deadly danger. The reader follows an exciting quest rather than trying to solve an enigma” (Pyrhonen 10). Though they are not private investigators per se, Murakami’s protagonists fit this profile of hard-boiled heroes because they are ordinary men that through no fault of their own are thrown into quests they cannot seem to ignore. They are heroes not because they perform amazing feats, but because they do what has to be done. In hard-boiled detective narratives the importance
is placed on the investigation, while the crime along with previous events becomes secondary. According to literary critic George Grella, the protagonist of hard-boiled novels retreats into himself to escape from a suffocating immorality. Grella goes on to state that “analyses have centered on the figure of the detective because critics argue that in him is invested the moral sanction of the fictional world” (cited in Pyrhonen 60). This essay will probe the protagonist’s escapes into themselves to determine what moral issues they face in the quest for personal identity. Once they discover their personal identities they must then face the moral dilemma of whether or not the social, economic, and political cost of that identity is worth the price.
Haruki Murakami’s *A Wild Sheep Chase* was published in 1982 and then republished in 1989 in an English translation by Alfred Birnbaum. *A Wild Sheep Chase* is Murakami’s third book and earned him the Noma Literary Award for New Writers. The novel’s “fragmented, discontinuous structure” identifies it as postmodern, according to critic Yoshio Iwamoto, who further describes it as “paratactic, agglutinative, and cavalierly unfaithful to the rules of cause and effect that might be expected in a narrative that carries a detective- or mystery- story line” (“Voice” 296). Murakami uses the detective genre to shape the events in the novel. His hard-boiled style is an appropriate vehicle through which the protagonist can discover on his own how to break out of the mediocre state that his life is in. The structure of the hard-boiled genre helps to direct the actions of the protagonist while still allowing Murakami to mix literary styles.

By mixing elements of magic realism with literary traits inherent to the detective genre, Murakami is able to explore the East-West dichotomy prevalent in Japanese modernity. Masao Miyoshi in his revised edition of *Off Center* points out that Japan appears comfortable alongside “so-called” advanced nations most likely due to its reintegration amongst other nations brought on by mass production and consumerism. According to Miyoshi, these post war economic developments have raised Japan to the rank of a “full-fledged member of the global organizational capitalist alliance. As such, a significant part of its cultural life has merged with international mass phenomena” (27). *A Wild Sheep Chase* explores Japan’s state-controlled capitalism. Murakami’s characters
serve to illustrate the effects on the individual of a society driven by mass consumption and production. The rising dissatisfaction rate of the Japanese worker among the latest generations is a result of Japan’s economic boom shortly after WWII. As Michael Hedgepath points out, “most young Japanese have grown up in affluent families and are not easily convinced that society’s demands of sacrifice and hard work are justified” (34). He attributes this to the fact that for Japan “prosperity has already come, there is no great external threat, and the domestic situation offers no single rallying point. Social rigidity and self-deprivation seem pointless in modern Japan” (Hedgepath 34). Boku, in A Wild Sheep Chase, is an embodiment of these post war generations.

As a college student in the midst of the student upheavals of the 1960s, Boku admits to having felt a lack of purpose in his life. He realizes that, “for months I’d been stuck, unable to take one step in any new direction. The world kept moving on; I alone was at a standstill” (Murakami, Sheep 7). The failed student activism of the 1960s, known as the Zenkyōtō movement, paralleled the confusion of a new generation of Japanese. The social pressure to belong to a certain company and do a certain job increased, leaving students confused about their lack of choices. The inability to choose their own paths left some Japanese with the very lack of purpose that Boku experiences. Students like Boku found themselves in a state of ambivalence. Boku then personifies the apathetic attitude of an entire generation left afloat. He sums up his situation by concluding that he “was twenty-one at the time, about to turn twenty-two. No prospects of graduating soon, and yet no reason to quit school” (Murakami, Sheep 7). He makes it through school only to face after graduation the prospect of joining Japan’s driven
workforce. Boku sees his job as the "fruit of many years of pointless self-discipline" (Murakami, *Sheep* 13). His existence, in short, begins to lean toward that of a corporate drone. When his wife leaves him, Boku finds that "nothing changed from day to day, not one thing. I woke up at seven, made toast and coffee, headed out to work, ate dinner out, had one or two drinks, went home, read in bed for an hour, turned off the lights and slept" (Murakami, *Sheep* 20). He had fallen into the habit of routine. Just as when he was a college student, the world around him is changing, but he remains the same.

Boku’s business partner notices the moving world and remarks to him, “a lot of things have changed,” complaining about the consequences of rapid change (Murakami, *Sheep* 47). Boku’s business partner pessimistically believes that different interest groups are exploiting the public through the advertisements his firm creates. The partner sees the changes in the pace of their lives and their thinking as triggers for losing the knowledge of who they are and resorts to alcohol to adjust. Hedgepath identifies the rapid pace of Japanese society as a basis for the desensitization to consumerist culture of the modern citizen (12). Boku deals with the same societal changes through a detached cynicism that allows him to agree that their company tosses out fluff, but he then asks his partner “where does anyone deal in words of substance” (Murakami, *Sheep* 49)? He no longer views people in corporate Japan as honest. He sees everyone as wearing a corporate mask, including himself. When Boku gets the bizarre opportunity to break away from the mediocrity of his daily routine by hunting for the mysterious sheep he feels he has no other choice.
Boku's "opportunity" is introduced through the advent of an investigation. Just as in American hard-boiled detective novels, the case comes to Boku through a source that is more than he seems. Instead of the femme fatale of a Chandler novel, it is a secretary for the illusive "Boss" that he is not sure he can trust. Boku is willing to give up everything he has to solve the enigma of the mysterious sheep. He acts on the information that he receives from the man, but depends on his own intuition and cognitive powers to find the answers; however, along the way he encounters help from unlikely sources. As helpful as these sources are to him, in the end Boku remains alone.

The resulting sense of isolation surrounding the protagonist is a traditional component of the hard-boiled genre and serves to identify the tension existing between corporate power and the individual. The tension is caused by the struggle to define to what extent personal identity exists in the corporate state. One way Murakami experiments with the concept of personal identity in *A Wild Sheep Chase* is by not giving the main characters personal names. Lack of personal names allows Murakami to use the characters as examples of corporate typing. The characters are known by other elements. Physical attributes define characters such as "the girl with the beautiful ears" and the Sheep Man, a man dressed as a sheep. By using physical characteristics to name the characters, Murakami introduces the concept that who they are is what they are or appear outwardly to be. Other characters are named by function alone. These characters become defined by their roles in the corporate world. "The Boss" is the man in charge, the limo driver is a limo driver, and the secretary or man in the black suit works for the person in charge. Functionary names suggest to the reader that the character's
individuality becomes erased by the character’s immersion in corporate structure. The more developed characters’ names represent some personal characteristic; such as, the Rat and the Sheep Professor. These characters have more personal depth in that they are asserting some form of individuality. Defining characters by function, form and characteristics allows the characters to represent not a specific individual’s situation in society, but a collection of proto-individuals facing the pressures of a communal identity.

Murakami is careful, however, to refer to the protagonist of the story only as Boku. The hero is so devoid of any identity that he is not named after a quality or even a function. His role is to discover how to begin the struggle towards a personal identity in contemporary Japanese society. His total lack of personal identity adds to the hero’s isolation from the other characters. Even though Boku marries, is friends with J, his business colleague, and Rat, and is lover to “the girl with the beautiful ears,” he seems ever alone in the novel. This isolation adds to the aloofness often found in the hero of a hard-boiled detective novel.

Despite the perceived isolation of the narrator, Boku receives direction throughout his investigation from “the girl with the beautiful ears.” Murakami’s use of magic realism to give the ears of “the girl with the beautiful ears” prophetic power works as a catalyst for Boku’s struggle against corporate communalism. Her ears are receptors for audible messages meant for them alone. It is she who alerts him that an important phone call about sheep is coming and that it will be the start of an adventure. She talks him into starting the quest, and she is also the one who chooses The Dolphin Hotel where Boku meets the Sheep Professor. “The girl with the beautiful ears” is not especially
exceptional, except for her ears. Her ears are one instance in the novel of something ordinary being infused with magical elements. Boku finds her ears fascinating and believes that they hold some special power. She admits that her ears in their unblocked state are extraordinary and associates her identity with them. Her control over "blocking" and "unblocking" her ears' abilities are one way that she asserts her own individuality. She explains to Boku that she is not just an "ear holder"; instead, she tells him "I am my ears, my ears are me" (Murakami, Sheep 27). She accepts her uniqueness as an individual and does not try to rationalize away the power her ears have over some people. Thus, "The girl with the beautiful ears" serves as an example of individualism for the reader. Her ability to block and unblock her ears is her way of remaining in control in a corporate society. Her ears are a commodity over which she has complete control.

However, it is not the prophetic properties of the girl's ears that convey the strongest element of magic realism in Murakami's A Wild Sheep Chase; instead, it is the elusive sheep. The secretary hires Boku to locate a particular Sheep for his boss, who believes the Sheep to be the key to his political and economic success. Boku's only lead is a photograph of some sheep on an undisclosed mountain location sent to him by Rat. Murakami is careful to have the secretary explain to Boku how sheep were not indigenous to Japan, but were imported from the West. The malevolent corporate symbol created by the magical sheep is a social critique by Murakami warning the public about the dangers of abandoning Japanese traditions in the wholesale acceptance of Western cultural practices. The sinister sheep exists in the novel as a purely magical element. It is of no breed known anywhere on the planet and possesses the power to enter and
control individuals. Ultimately, I read the sheep as the negative aspects of the corporate state. This is not to say that Japan's corporate state is entirely detrimental to its people. The corporate state can provide many positive enhancements in the work force. It gives momentum to the economy as illustrated by Japan's rapid economic growth during the second half of the 20th century. Furthermore, a powerful corporate state empowers society with a drive, purpose and focus that continues to feed into its economic progress. The difficulty arises in the fact that these positive aspects are engaged on a societal level not an individual one. The corporate identity completely subsumes individuality and leaves the workers as empty husks. The significance then of the sheep as a manipulative agent is that it shows the destructive power of the hostile corporate world over individual freedom. Once the corporation abandons the people they easily lose their focus and drive.

For example, the three beings the sheep manipulates react to their possession in different ways. "The Boss" before lapsing into a coma does not care about the destructive consequences of his actions under the sheep's control. He reveled in the power that surrounded him due to the sheep's influence. When the sheep removes its influence from "The Boss" he is not the strong decisive leader that his followers believe. He becomes weak from the sheep's abandonment almost to the point of death. The relationship between "The Boss" and the sheep is an example of the corruptive power of a communal corporate identity. When the community withdraws from a person, or the person leaves the communal presence, he or she is left without the resources to maintain his or her existence. It is not just the individual who is harmed by the separation but the
corporation suffers as well. The sheep’s relationship with the people he possesses is often symbiotic. The sheep requires an agent to spread his agenda throughout the corporate world, while some types of the possessed, such as “The Boss,” require the vitality that the sheep gives them.

Others such as the Sheep Professor are merely temporarily used by the Sheep to achieve its objectives. The Sheep Professor is not physically affected by the sheep’s defection; instead, he is left with the solitary thought of the sheep minus its embodiment. He describes this existence as “hell. A maze of subterranean hell. Unmitigated by even one shaft of light or a single draft of water,” a state he has suffered for forty-two years (Murakami, Sheep 186). The Sheep Professor’s hell is not that he misses the power of the sheep; it is because he realizes he is responsible for bringing the sheep into Japan from the West. He knew the sheep had a purpose for being in Japan, but the sheep never made that purpose clear to him. His guilt is in the knowledge that the people of Japan are open to the manipulations of the sheep. He sees the efficiency of Japan as a major flaw. He tells Boku that “the daily-life level is missing from our thinking. We minimize the time factor to maximize the results. It’s like that with everything. In other words, we don’t have our feet on solid ground” (Murakami, Sheep 188). The sheep takes advantage of this instability in a result-driven corporate environment. With this knowledge the Sheep Professor feels the pain of being “sheepless” because he is unable to exorcise the idea of the sheep from his mind even though its physical presence is gone. Unlike The Boss, though, he is not terminally injured by his sheeplessness because of the less active role he played in the sheep’s agenda. The degree of pain involved through association
with the sheep is directly proportional to the extent of active involvement the carrier has in the sheep’s major purpose.

Both The Boss and the Sheep Professor initially invite the sheep into their minds, influencing the rest of their lives. However, not all the possessed are willing hosts. The third case of possession in *A Wild Sheep Chase* is Boku’s friend Rat, the embodiment in the novel of the *freeter* lifestyle. Rat avoids corporate conformity through defiance in order to create structure in his life. It is the experience of Rat’s struggle with the sheep that leads Boku to some of the answers he has been searching for. Rat sends him two letters. One of the letters includes the portentous sheep photograph. In Rat’s second letter he shows his rebellion against not only the sheep but also social conformity. Rat tells Boku, “in a sense, I’ve reached what is for me a final destination. I feel like I’ve come to where I was meant to come. What’s more, I feel I’ve had to swim against the current to get here. But that’s nothing I can pass judgment on” (Murakami, *Sheep* 80). What Rat is saying is that it was not easy, but he did not conform and he is in charge of his own life. Going against the current of societal expectation has brought him to a place in his life where he feels he should be. Unfortunately, the point in his life that finally gives him a sense of meaning is when he waits for the sheep to be asleep inside him and then hangs himself. Rat tells Boku that “Yes, I had to go that far. If I waited, the sheep would have controlled me absolutely. It was my last chance” (Murakami, *Sheep* 280). Rat informs Boku of the sheep’s major plan. He tells him that the sheep wanted to create “a realm of total conceptual anarchy. A scheme in which all opposites would be resolved into unity. With me and the sheep at the center” (Murakami, *Sheep* 284). The sheep’s
strategy was to destroy individuality and make everything the same. The sheep’s major plan, that Rat could not bear to see come to fruition, was the creation of the communal corporate identity that supplants individuality.

Murakami uses the sheep to parallel Japan’s bubble economy showing how the replacement of individualism with communal identity within society creates a culture that builds, and builds towards nothing and eventually leads to collapse just as the Boss collapses when the Sheep is no longer building him up. The Sheep uses the negative qualities of Japan’s traditional conformity to build corporate strength as a tool to achieve disorganization. By directing society towards nothing and then deserting it, the Sheep is using Japan’s own traditions against them. Murakami’s narrative comments on the damaging effects only applying traditional Japanese economic practices to global capitalism has on Japanese society implying that modernity must be met with a willingness to create societal change. Rat commits the ultimate sacrifice to maintain his own personal identity instead of letting the Sheep control his actions. Boku does not find personal identity with the circumstances of Rat’s death, but it sparks the genesis of Boku’s own struggle between individuality and the corporate state.

Boku’s investigations into finding the sheep in Rat’s photo bring him from Tokyo to the Dolphin Hotel in Hokkaido where he meets the Sheep Professor. The Sheep Professor identifies the area in the photo and sends Boku to the township of Junitaki, a few hours away from Hokkaido where the Sheep Professor once had a homestead. It is on Boku’s return from the homestead that he recalls Rat’s family has a vacation home in the mountains of Hokkaido. When Boku begins his stay in the mountain lodge he already...
suspects from the information that he has gathered what happened between the sheep and his friend Rat, and that Rat was already dead. Boku’s episode with the mirror shows his confusion about his own identity. When he views his mirror image in the isolated house in Hokkaido he doesn’t believe he is viewing his flat mirror-image. He sees his image as more defined than he has ever seen it before, but he recoils from that image and cannot see his empirical self as the real him. The image in the mirror, or his emergent identity, is the one that can see the corporate façade of himself on the outside of the looking glass. He becomes disoriented about which him is copying which, the one in the mirror or the one outside. Boku begins to doubt whether his actions are of his own free will or if they are merely imitations of another.

Boku believes that the mirror is showing him reality, which is why when the Sheep Man does not show up in the mirror he knows it is not the Sheep Man he has conversed with; but instead is someone not in this reality. It is in that moment of seeing himself alone in the mirror that Boku knows that Rat is dead. After Rat confirms Boku’s conclusions and fills him in on the rest of the story, Boku finishes the job undertaken at the beginning. He has found the elusive sheep and reports to the man in the black suit. Boku discovers that his purpose was not to solve the case by finding the sheep; instead, it was to lure the sheep in his friend out of hiding so that “The Boss” could have the sheep again. Boku’s betrayal by the man in the black suit is just one more example of the manipulative forces behind corporate exteriors. Boku separates himself from the corporate scheme when he does not warn the secretary not to go up the mountain in search of the Sheep.
As a result of Boku’s quest he walks away from Hokkaido with more money than he has ever had before, but also with the knowledge that he has lost his best friend and his ability to coast through life without questioning the corporate state. Boku can no longer be content with the mediocre existence he was leading before. He returns to one of the most stable people in his life, his friend J. Boku creates a secure base for himself by giving J the money with the only condition being that he will always be welcome in J’s bar. Boku knows that his journey to discover his identity is just beginning and that he cannot count on anything in his life to keep staying the same. He cries for everything that he has lost, as he has never cried before, but instead of being defeated he gets up with the resolution to move on. Whereas the Rat, who had a sense of himself, killed himself rather than lose that self, Boku, who has never known who he really is, now has the responsibility to recognize his embryonic identity and embrace it.

Boku’s choice to accept his individuality in a corporate state is a difficult one in the amalgamative culture of modern Japan. The tension between tradition and modernity, symptomatic in Japan’s globalized society, has to be resolved into a harmonic balance. Unfortunately, “cultural origins become less significant after a period of assimilation and adaptation, unless there is some reason for maintaining the distinction” (Hedgepath 5). Murakami works towards uncovering a sense of balance through the inner and outer worlds he creates in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. 
CHAPTER THREE: *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*

As opposed to the external searching done in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Murakami’s explorations on the theme of identity are internalized in his Tanizaki-award-winning novel *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. The novel was first published in Japan in 1985, and in 1991 was translated into English by Alfred Birnbaum. Although both the protagonists from *A Wild Sheep Chase* and *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* are unnamed, they are not the same character. The continuity between the novels exists in Murakami’s continuing treatise on the struggle between the individual and the corporate state. The unnamed protagonist of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* is torn between his empirical self and an internalized world of his own creation. The plot follows two narratives in alternating chapters, one known as *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* and the other as *End of the World*. The development of the individual’s struggle for personal identity is enacted both internally and externally by the dual protagonists of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. They actively involve themselves in investigating the aspects of identity; one in the corporeal world, the *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, and the other in the fantastic or the *End of the World*. Murakami’s use of magical realism to create the dichotomy between the conscious and the subconscious by constructing the coexistence of the *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* and the *End of the World* allows him to alternate the story back and forth between the two realities exploring both the internal and the external elements of identity. The complex developments of the theme become enhanced by the simultaneous existence of two
distinct realities: one the tangible world of Tokyo where the protagonist deals in laundering and shuffling data, the other the fantastic world of the Town in which his alter ego is the Dreamreader. Murakami creates, through magic realism, the means for the protagonist to exist in both the mundane urban setting of a futuristic Tokyo and the utopian landscape of “The Town” as two unique personalities unaware of the existence of the other. Murakami’s use of alternating chapters divides the novel equally between the two worlds. The binary structure created in the novel is used as a tool to investigate the nature of individualism in the *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, or conscious world, and in the *End of the World*, or subconscious. Both parts of the narrative use first person narration; however, Murakami uses Watashi to refer to the *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* narrator and the more informal Boku to refer to the *End of the World* narrator. Unfortunately, this distinction cannot be made in the English translation of Murakami’s novel since the English language only has one form of the pronoun “I” (Strecher, “Beyond” 361). The reader soon realizes that Watashi and Boku are two halves of the same mind; and the dualistically contrasting perceptions of the narrators are merely two ways that the mind looks at the world around it.

Murakami’s novel takes the reader through a fast-paced narrative of survival, ending in what appears in the *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* to be surrender to the system. The real question is whether the actions of Boku and Watashi are submissive to or rebellious against the System of a futuristic Tokyo and the artificially created world of the subconscious (Strecher, “Beyond” 36). Murakami experiments with technique to answer these questions in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. Murakami
develops two simultaneous plots in which Watashi "launders" and "shuffles" corporate data while a different scenario is being played out within his subconscious mind (Devereaux 113). The urban setting and a tough narrator personally involved in the quest, create a more hard-boiled atmosphere than in *A Wild Sheep Chase* where the narrator was someone that things happened to, not an active agent. Murakami’s technical experimentation within the detective genre results in a narrative that "communicates a moving, emotionally understated meditation on mind and identity, on science and humanity, on dreams of utopia and the comforting familiarity and various satisfactions of our messy, flat, uncommon lives" (Horvath 1). The seamless movement between the two worlds through alternating chapters is surprisingly un-disjointed.

As seamlessly as the two worlds of Murakami’s novel come together, there are some distinct differences between them in form, style, and setting. Watashi relates Murakami’s chapters concerning the *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* to the reader through past tense. Descriptions of the *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* by Murakami and Watashi are much more detailed than the descriptions in the *End of the World* chapters. Murakami describes the glossy high-rise office building in the first chapter down to the nonlinear numbers on the office doors the narrator is walking past. As noted by critic Max Turner, the titles to these chapters contain more details than the titles to the *End of the World* chapters (2). The *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* chapters are introduced by sets of three specific things. For example, Chapter 7 is entitled "Skull, Lauren Bacall, Library" and chapter 33 is "Rainy-day Laundry, Car Rental, Bob Dylan." The titles extract specific details from the chapter they introduce, mundane details from everyday existence;
whereas, the titles introducing the *End of the World* segments consist of one item. The titles for these passages represent not mundane objects of everyday life, but items of greater significance. For instance, chapter six is entitled "Shadow," chapter 18 is "Dreamreading" and chapter 22 is "Gray Smoke" all of these terms illustrate a philosophical question or aspect of existence with which the narrator is grappling. People's shadows are their core identities, dream reading is the act by which a person's identity is lost forever, or ultimately recovered, and gray smoke symbolizes the cycle of destruction and rebirth. The importance of the existential nature of these titles is that they help to emphasize the struggle and isolation of individuals in an indifferent universe. Ironically, this isolation occurs in an apparently utopian existence. The *End of the World* segments of the narrative grapple with philosophical questions about individual existence and being while *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*’s emphasis centers around the philosophical questions concerning the moral implications of modernity and information as a commodity on a societal level. The *End of the World* chapters are set apart from the details of existence through the use of the present tense. Details that are fixed and cannot be altered are set in time by Murakami’s placement of them in the past; whereas, the misty details and amnesia like state of the narrator in the *End of the World* implicates a present and a future that can still be shaped (Turner 1). Boku’s aversion to sunlight due to his eyes being altered by the Gatekeeper, a symbol of state or corporate control in the *End of the World*, is significant to the lack of detail in the End of the World. His modified eyesight keeps him from focusing in a way that suggests the larger problems of
personal identity formation. Boku exists as if in a dream world, always just out of reach of understanding and unable to see clearly.

The significant nature of the System in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* and the Town in *End of the World* illustrate the same controlling factor the state has on suppressing the creation of individual identity. According to Matthew Strecher, the portrayal of the state as all-powerful, omniscient and evil, common in Murakami’s work, is part of the hard-boiled formula. The contrast of the hero against this evil helps to establish the rebellious, marginalized character as wholesome (Strecher, “Beyond” 362). The whole existence of a subterranean world beneath the city of Tokyo where monsters, known as INKlings, feed on corporate business men in the subways, adds to the “sinister characterization of the city as a beautiful shell, teeming with evil and danger” that is so important in hard-boiled detective novels for it “underscores the notion that evil lurking in society is not isolated psychopathy, but an endemic feature of the modern (or in this case, postmodern) social structure” (Strecher, “Beyond” 362). The evil lurking in the postmodern setting of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* and *the End of the World* results from the status of information as a key to power, a commodity, and something to be protected at all costs. In modern Japan, information is an important part of the culture and is embodied in the contextualist memorization exams of its school system. Information has become a source of status in Japan as illustrated by the *otaku*, a group of mostly young males who specialize in forms of information, such as military or pop cultural facts and figures (Greenfield 275). They receive their status not through how they get their information, but in the memorization
and ownership of the information (Hedgepath 19). Murakami uses Watashi as an example of the importance placed on information possession in modern Japan.

Watashi’s world is a futuristic Tokyo, yet one that is not inconceivable given the existence of the modern *otaku*, where information has become the most sought after commodity. The description of the elevator in the high rise office building devoid of human presence, mechanized and sound absorbent, epitomizes the sterile setting of the urban landscape. Watashi becomes completely isolated within its antiseptic space. Watashi relates to the reader a modern society that runs on the efficiency of a communal corporate atmosphere filled “from end to end with dangers both seen and unseen” (Strecher, “Beyond” 361). The known dangers of Watashi’s world stem from the competition over the ownership of information. In a society where knowledge equals power, the struggle for control endangers the people in possession of important information. Watashi deals with information. He submits to physical alterations by the System, or an “obscure agency (supposedly the ‘good guys’) whose purpose is to prevent information from falling into the devious hands of the Factory,” to become a Calcutec (Turner 1). Watashi thus becomes a biological artifact for the shifting and masking of information. His position turns him into a device, a tool for the gathering and processing of information, while paradoxically gaining him a higher social status and a sense of autonomy. Along with his raised social status, Watashi lives in constant danger from the Factory’s agents, Semiotecs, who steal information through any means they can. Murakami’s use of the term Semiotecs to represent the faction opposed to the System can be linked with the literary term semiotics. In literary studies, semiotics is used to define
the study of signs and how meanings are derived from them. Critic Iwamoto relates Roland Barthes’ conclusions about Japanese culture recorded in *The Empire of Signs* that there is a tendency in Japanese culture to focus on the signified rather than the signifier which tends to “produce ‘silences’ and diffuse ‘meaning’” (Iwamoto, “Voice” 296). Barthe’s reading of Japanese culture focuses mainly on “traditional aspects” still present in contemporary Japan. The Semiotecs seen through the lens of Barthe’s view of semiotics in Japanese culture are a commentary on the appropriation of information for only ownership’s sake, as shown by the *Otaku*. Paradoxically, the Semiotecs opposition of the system also represents a blind hold on tradition for tradition’s sake resisting the changes of modernization. Murakami’s narrative demonstrates both how information and tradition without meaning are harmful to society. Murakami uses the Semiotecs to demonstrate the struggle between the State and other organizations active in politics and business over the distribution of information in modern Japan (Hedgepath 38).

Watashi becomes an important commodity to the Semiotecs due to the interference of the scientist’s experiments on his implanted shuffling switches. An example of the states need to control the flow of information exists in Watashi’s expendability within the System if they believe he has changed sides. Throughout the *Hard-Boiled* narrative, Watashi goes from part of the System, to rebelling against the System, to anger at his impotence in controlling his own fate, to finally an acceptance of that fate. He ironically relates his position to the scientist by admitting, “it’s all a foregone conclusion. I’m screwed. Both sides are after me, and if I stand still my existence is annulled” (Murakami, *Hard-Boiled* 273). He does not share the scientist’s
distinction between death and becoming nonexistent in the empirical reality that he now
knows. At first Watashi does not expect anything from death; he sees it as a lack of
consciousness. He later comes to believe that perhaps his ceasing to exist in the hard-
boiled reality will enable him to find the identity he has lost in the corporate world. He
admits, “Now I could reclaim all I’d lost. What’s lost never perishes” (Murakami, *Hard-
Boiled* 396). Watashi is finally accepting the concept the old scientist has, that
everything he has lost will exist in the other world and it is only a matter of him
reclaiming it once he gets there. The scientist explains the *End of the World* to Watashi
as a place where “everythin’ that’s in this world here and now is missin’ from that world.
There’s no time, no life, no death. No values in any strict sense. No self. In that world
of yours, people’s selves are externalized into beasts” (Murakami, *Hard-Boiled* 270).
Murakami’s use of this utopian internal world offers a contrast to the bleak view of the
postmodern world in “Hard-boiled Wonderland.” The narrator is able to switch back and
forth from Watashi to Boku through accessing a little black box surgically placed in his
mind. The black box is where Watashi’s shuffling of information takes place; however, it
is also the mechanism that short circuits, threatening the termination of his existence in
the external world and creating the major conflict in the novel. Watashi faces the
possibility of no longer existing in the world that he knows, the external realm of “Hard-
Boiled Wonderland.” He admits that his life isn’t much but argues that he is “not entirely
dissatisfied with this life” and does not quite understand why but continues to say “I feel
pretty much at home with what I am. I don’t want to go anywhere. I don’t want any
While Watashi deals with the probability of physical death in the *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, Boku in the *End of the World* is struggling against the loss of his mind, memories, and individuality through separation from his Shadow. The Shadow in the *End of the World* is a person's mind containing his or her personal identity and memories, the core identity of a person. The Gatekeeper whose job it is to cut away the ties between the person and his or her Shadow, and then to keep them apart until the Shadow withers away and dies, embodies the system or state that seeks to control the individual. In Jungian psychology, the Shadow is a person's "unconscious personality" which possesses a certain amount of autonomy," an archetype created by the collective unconscious of society (Storr 87-91). The Shadow represents the hidden aspects of identity, and the less it is embodied in consciousness, the more repressed it will become (88-91). When Boku arrives in the Town and submits to having his Shadow taken from him, the Shadow resists and searches for a way to escape, refusing to succumb to the oppression of conformism, as Boku becomes trapped in the day to day workings of the Town and his new role as Dreamreader. The repression of the Shadow, or its isolation from the individual, keeps the individual from any kind of self knowledge because acknowledging the hidden aspects of identity that the Shadow represents, in this instance the cultural, personal past of Boku, is a necessary step towards self recognition. The Gatekeeper's removal of the Shadow demonstrates in Boku the repressed state of individuals totally severed from their traditional past.

Whereas the setting for *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* is a sterile corporate landscape run by the System and the factory, the *End of the World* takes place in a nameless rural
town where everyone has one purpose that he or she performs for eternity. The Town is a creation of Boku's subconscious mind that was altered by an eccentric scientist much as an editor splices together bits of film to create a movie. Golden unicorns that breathe in the essence of people's minds, a Gatekeeper that severs people's shadows from them, and Walls that separate the Town from everything else, belie the apparent utopian existence the reader first feels towards a town where people exist without disease and death, and are immortal. The people who remain are devoid of their core-identities and only exist to fulfill their specific roles in society. Arguably, a utopian existence cannot exist without emotion to feel joy, happiness and love. Boku explains the Town as having "no joy, no communion, no love. Only where there is disillusionment and depression and sorrow does happiness arise; without despair of loss there is no hope" (Murakami, *Hard-Boiled* 334). In other words, a person must accept pain, despair, and loneliness. In order for paradise to exist, people must also allow for the existence of hell. Therefore, the *End of the World* is not a utopian society, but rather a fantasy of one. Boku's function in the utopia, dream reading, is designed to destroy autonomy in favor of communal roles.

The act of dream reading therefore takes on several different kinds of significance. In one way it illustrates Boku's use by the state as a tool to gather information; however, he is unable to process the information released from the unicorn skulls. According to Matthew Strecher, Boku's "dream-reading is in a larger sense a metaphor for interpreting signs in any form, or any language, but to read with neither interpretation, retention, nor even comprehension or purpose ultimately voids the unconscious of all thought and volition" ("Beyond" 365). Boku is aware of his own
incomprehension of the dreams. He admits, “while I recognize that the old dreams relate to something in me, I am lost” (Murakami, *Hard-Boiled* 184). By reading and not understanding the dreams he is releasing, he is losing parts of his own identity, weakening his Shadow. He shares with the librarian his frustration at not being able to derive meaning or purpose from his job, and how inadequate this makes him feel by stating that “the more old dreams I read the more I apprehend my own helplessness. I cannot divine the message of dreams. I read them without any understanding of them” (Murakami, *Hard-Boiled* 182). His helplessness begins to disappear when Boku discovers he has purpose: to find the parts of himself that have started to drift away as his Shadow gets weaker, and to recover the librarian’s mind and memories. He becomes stronger and begins to remember his empirical self. Dream reading now takes on the positive significance of recovering an autonomous self. Boku tells the librarian that the mind leads to oneself and that nothing leads anywhere without the mind. Before beginning the search for the librarian’s mind he warns her that with a mind she must be willing to experience the unpleasant emotions along with the good, and that the cost of recovering her individual self would be exile from the Town. She would no longer view the Town as a utopian society. He wants to be sure that she is willing to accept everything she will lose by regaining her identity. She responds to his cautions by relating that her mother once told her that “if one has mind, nothing is ever lost, regardless of where one goes” (Murakami, *Hard-Boiled* 350-351). She believes, as much as a person without any emotions can believe, that she can regain her identity and not grieve for the existence she is giving up. The Librarian believes that when she recovers
her mind, her identity, she will not suffer a loss of self again. Boku, now with a purpose, is able to control his dream reading and direct it in the search for the Librarian’s lost self and in so doing also recovers lost bits of himself.

With the recovery of some of his identity and the knowledge that more bits and pieces are coming back to him, Boku is able to finally figure out what the existence of the Town means. He is unable to escape with his Shadow when he has the opportunity because of the responsibility he feels towards the Town. Boku realizes what the Shadow has known all along; that the Town was a creation of his own mind. He tells his Shadow that he cannot leave because he:

 Cannon forsake the people and places and things I have created. I know I do you a terrible wrong. And yes, perhaps I wrong myself, too. But I must see out the consequences of my own doings. This is my world. The Wall is here to keep me in, the River flows through me, the smoke is me burning. I must know why (Murakami, Hard-Boiled 399).

Boku comes to the decision to remain in the End of the World, however, not in the Town. The Woods outside the Town, a place where those who refuse to conform live in exile, remains the one place in the End of the World where Boku can regain and retain his identity. The people of the Town fear the Woods and the people in it because they “exert an influence over” people not yet formed in their town identities. The Woods are seen as a danger to conformism. Boku is abandoning his Shadow identity, but he is not leaving it trapped in the Town to die or having it remain by his side in his self imposed exile. His Shadow escapes through the pool, but his fate is unknown. The reader is never told
where the pool empties, if the Shadow survives the trip, or if he does survive whether he can exist alone without Boku. Before he leaves, his Shadow disagrees with Boku’s decision to remain in the End of the World. He argues that merely existing in the *End of the World* is not living even if he remains immortal. He argues, “there is no ‘why’ in a world that would be perfect in itself” (Murakami, *Hard-Boiled 399*). Boku remains impassive to his Shadow’s entreaties and watches as his Shadow disappears into the pool, swept away forever. Just as Rat in *A Wild Sheep Chase* had to decide between losing his identity to death or to the control of the sheep, Boku has to decide between the identities of escaping into the unknown with his Shadow, remaining and conforming to the Town, or existing in the margins of society. If he decides to remain in the Town, he would be choosing conformism, just as Rat would have been giving in to the Sheep. By choosing to exist on the fringes of society, Boku is choosing the *freeter* lifestyle that the Rat drifted through before ending up in Hokkaido. He tells his Shadow that his purpose in choosing the Woods and its marginality results from the belief, that without the pressures of the Town to conform, he might slowly be able to recall things, “People and places from our former world, different qualities of light, different songs. And as I remember, I may find the key to my own creation, and to its undoing” (Murakami, *Hard-Boiled 399*). His Shadow scoffs at him believing that as long as Boku remains locked in his own subconscious he will never know the answers without being reconnected to his Shadow. Boku chooses to take that chance and remains to create a new Shadow reflective of his new understanding of identity and himself.
It is hard to determine whether he made the correct decision because the reader is left without any clues as to what would have resulted if Boku had deserted the constructed world of his mind by escaping with his Shadow through the pool. Just as in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Boku ends up “alone at the farthest periphery of existence. Here the world expires and is still” (Murakami, *Hard-Boiled 400*). Instead of allowing himself to give in to despair, the protagonist is able to turn and keep walking, only this time he has the Librarian waiting for him. Much like Boku, in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, he arrives at his conclusions concerning the Town’s construction through his own experiences and returning memories, but the scientist explains the investigation’s resolution in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* to Watashi. He becomes aware of what is happening to him and who did it to him, but the investigation never resolves in a way that Western readers have come to expect from hard-boiled detective novels. There is no concrete conclusion to the narrative. Watashi disappears into his subconscious away from the System and Boku remains to regain his history and identity in the Woods outside the confines of the Town, yet still within the limits of the Wall.

As alien as this form of open ended narration is to Western readers, it is a common trait of the popular Japanese *shosetsu* novel. Murakami’s ending and Boku’s role in it are perfect examples of Miyoshi’s definition of the modern *shosetsu*. He states that:

While the character is always defined in the close texture of society, thus imparting to the character an approximation of a role, the plot is open-ended and spacious, as if one’s true existence is irrelevant to the actual details of living, the
acts and events of actuality. Politically and psychologically deprived of liberty and freedom, shosetsu characters seem to inhabit a space unbothered by life's constraints (22).

Watashi and Boku’s rebellion against their conformist roles embodies this shosetsu representation of Japanese identity. The struggle against state control both by Watashi and by Boku takes the form of their quests to discover who they are relevant to the “actual details of living.” For Watashi, that search becomes finding what he lost of himself when he submitted to becoming a Calcutec. Boku’s quest involves discovering the meaning behind dream reading and the relationship between him and his Shadow. Just like Watashi he was physically altered to perform his job, but the alterations were not of his choice. The End of the World remains the connection between Boku and Watashi. Boku realizes that he is Watashi when he comes to the understanding that the End of the World is his own creation. Watashi’s subconscious formed the elements existing in the End of the World, if not the order of those elements due to the scientist’s manipulations of them. Although neither one of the narrators comes to a full understanding of his identity, they both accept the possibilities that their core-identities exist both in the external conscious and the internal subconscious apart from their corporate roles in society.

When Watashi lets go and allows himself to fall asleep ending his existence in the reality of urban Tokyo, is he submitting to the loss of himself just as when he became a Calcutec? No; like the Rat he cannot bear to lose forever life’s revelations. He reflects on seagulls, “snails and suzuki in butter sauce and shaving cream and Blowing in the
Wind,” the everyday joys of life (Murakami, *Hard-Boiled 395*). His acceptance of his own death becomes an act of rebellion against the corporate system that transmogrified his existence, and allows him to move forward and reclaim his altered self. Just as Watashi rebels against his role in conforming to the commodified world of late-capitalistic society, Boku turns his back on the Town. He does not actively choose to escape; instead, he remains on the fringes of society trying to paste together his identity from the fragments that remain behind in the unicorn skulls and his returning memories. Watashi and Boku never resolve the conflicts between their lives and the worlds where they find themselves. Murakami leaves the reader feeling unsure of what will happen to the narrators. *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* does not attempt to answer the question of how to solve the struggle between individualism and corporate identity, but it does endeavor to illustrate the consequences of becoming consumed by the corporate, industrialized world like Watashi, or of forgetting tradition due to the nostalgia of a romanticized utopian past like Boku.
CHAPTER FOUR: Dance Dance Dance

Murakami’s exploration of the theme of individual against communal identity begun in A Wild Sheep Chase and internalized in Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World coalesces into his 1988 novel Dance Dance Dance. Alfred Birnbaum translated the novel into English in 1994 for distribution in America. In Dance Dance Dance; the reader is reintroduced to the same narrator who began the struggle for personal identity in A Wild Sheep Chase. Four years have passed and he finds himself doing freelance public relations writing, or what he calls “shoveling cultural snow” (Murakami, Dance 2). In the previously discussed texts, the individual’s struggle against the corporate state begins, and is then explored. However, at the end of Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World, the search for independence is left unresolved. Through Boku’s experiences in Dance Dance Dance, Murakami resolves the individual’s struggle for personal identity in a communal society.

Dance Dance Dance, the sequel to A Wild Sheep Chase, centers around a divorced journalist who begins having dreams of his lost lover, who the reader learns is Kiki. He returns to Sapporo and the dilapidated Dolphin Hotel where he last saw her, hoping to discover answers to his restless dreams. On arrival, the narrator discovers a new Dolphin Hotel, completely modernized, where the old one had stood. His stay in the new hotel raises more questions in the narrator when he encounters a young desk clerk, Miss Yumiyoshi. She relates her strange experiences in the hotel to the narrator concerning an alternate floor that not everyone can see or visit. On this alternative floor,
the narrator finds the Sheep Man from *A Wild Sheep Chase* who serves as his guide: explaining to him that he has to “dance as long as the music plays;” only through metaphoric dance can the narrator reconnect himself to life. The narrator’s stay at the Dolphin Hotel also brings him into contact with Yuki, a clairvoyant troubled teen with whom fate continues to throw him together. While in Sapporo the narrator views a film starring an old childhood acquaintance from school surprised to find Kiki in one of the scenes. The narrator returns to Tokyo and contacts his old school mate, Gotanda, and the two become friends. Events from there then lead the narrator into a murder investigation, a trip to Hawaii, and eventually back to the Dolphin Hotel and Miss Yumiyoshi.

Out of the three detective novels considered in this study, the plot of *Dance Dance Dance* most clearly resembles a Western paradigm of the modern detective novel. The narrative involves the search for a missing person, a murder investigation, and demonstrates the moral dispossession of a culture obsessed with its own late-capitalistic consumerism. We see this moral vacuum, for instance, when Boku endures a mentally grueling three-day interrogation by the police because of his belief that personal loyalty supersedes the authority of the state. Boku’s concern is that if he tells the police his connection to the murdered prostitute that his friend Gotanda’s reputation would suffer. If the media were to find out about Gotanda’s involvement with an international prostitution ring, his career as a movie icon would be ruined. Boku’s loyalty for his friend is not the only thing that keeps him from cooperating with the police detectives. As the police discover, Boku has always rebelled against authority. The inspectors are aware of Boku’s former involvement with University Activists and they view his lack of
cooperation as a result of his "negative psychological reaction to anything that resembles authority" (Murakami, *Dance* 167).

Boku's reaction to the two police investigators, Fisherman and Bookish, is a telling example of Murakami's ability to lampoon his favorite literary genres. For example, Murakami uses an internal monologue comprised of stock metaphors to describe how Boku sees the grim visage of the police detective before the interrogation. Expressions such as "Spring as concept raged in upon us, a somber tide of longing. Its advent roused the passions of those nameless multitudes fallen between the cracks of the city, sweeping them noiselessly toward the quicksands of futility" are thought of and then dismissed by Boku as a dumb train of thought (Murakami, *Dance* 166-5). Even as Murakami has Boku dismiss the thought of these dark-and-stormy clichéd metaphors, they astutely convey the state of the narrator once his quest for identity began in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. He is one of the nameless multitudes swept into the fringes of society. The promise of Spring creates the longing for resolution that he is working towards in his search for Kiki, the girl with the beautiful ears from *A Wild Sheep Chase*, and yet he is uncertain about his place in society once he finishes his search. Boku constructs an understanding about Kiki and himself through pieces of information he gathers. By combining all of the connections between the fragments, he is able to solve the case surrounding Kiki's disappearance.

Stylistically, besides the playful use of simile and metaphor, Murakami deviates from his use of functional or descriptive names, using them only for minor characters in *Dance Dance Dance*. However, the protagonist remains simply, Boku. The detective
elements in the narrative begin when Boku succumbs to his compulsion to locate “the girl with the beautiful ears” from *A Wild Sheep Chase*. During his investigations, Boku discovers that the girl's name is Kiki, literally translated as “crisis” in Japanese while also being a derivative of the verb “to listen” (Nakao 126). He is not certain if this is her real name or just a name she uses in her job as a high priced prostitute. Boku’s search for Kiki enables him to meet several new people with whom he begins to form interpersonal relationships, something lacking in his life since the Rat’s death. His flippant flirtation with the hotel receptionist, Miss Yumiyoshi, at the new Dolphin Hotel soon deepens into something more. He finds himself an accidental mentor to Yuki, an adolescent girl caught between divorced parents and uncomfortable with the proper social forms of society. Boku then finds himself renewing the acquaintance of Gotanda, a boy from his school days, which soon develops into the closest male friendship Boku has had since the Rat. All of these burgeoning relationships are a natural progression in Boku’s reintegration to society on his own terms.

Boku’s work towards a resolution of the conflict between individual autonomy and collective society revolves around his search for Kiki. Murakami uses connections between people, places and objects to direct the narrator towards resolution, just as most of Japan’s “populace remains locked in the struggle to make meaningful connections in advanced capitalist society” (Miyoshi 36). The concept of these “connections” is the main component of Boku’s “searching.” Murakami uses magic realism to focus on the connections made from the apparent randomness of mundane life. Boku’s search for his core identity hinges on his ability to connect all the fragments of himself into a cohesive
whole. The focal point surrounding Boku’s reintegration is his memory of the Dolphin Hotel. He comes to the revelation in the end that “This place was my nexus, where everything tied together. This place is here for me” (Murakami, Dance 376). The Dolphin Hotel metamorphosis from a decrepit outdated hotel with creaking elevators to a completely modernized glossy high rise epitomizes the very model of corporate efficiency. Even though the Dolphin Hotel had been swallowed up by a strong-armed corporate conglomerate, the part of the hotel that Boku created still mentally exists for him in the alternate 16th floor. Boku finds himself distressed by the atmospheric changes to the Dolphin Hotel. The contrast between the old and the new clearly defines the crisis concerning Japan’s appropriation of late-capitalistic consumerism in its culture.

Boku’s disquiet with the hotel’s change is linked to the hotel’s importance in his search for his identity. The Dolphin Hotel is to Boku what the little black box was to Watashi in Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World. Both the hotel and the switches in the black box represent the means by which the narrator can enter an internal world of his creation made to help him discover the connections that enable him to exist in the real world. From within the Dolphin Hotel, Boku can view the same world from two perspectives. It is natural that he feels his autonomy threatened by the encroachment of modernity. He first returns to the Dolphin Hotel because of a series of bizarre dreams involving the hotel in which someone is crying insistently, someone he believes is Kiki. Once at the Dolphin Hotel, Boku is constantly being misdirected in his quest for Kiki. Seemingly unrelated events happen to him, which lead him away from his original goal only to illuminate fragmented details that add to his investigation of Kiki’s
disappearance. The serendipitous incidents in the narrative are important to direct the reader towards Boku’s reconnection to life. Murakami uses magic realism to bridge the gap between the fragments of the narrative, allowing a means through which the connections may come together and remain knotted. The sixteenth floor of the Dolphin Hotel, the room with six skeletons in Honolulu, and Yuki’s clairvoyant abilities are all ways that Murakami brings in magic realism to enhance the threads connecting Boku’s search enabling him to make the right connections. Boku receives guidance in accessing these areas of his journey. The Sheep Man from *A Wild Sheep Chase* exists on the old sixteenth floor parallel to the sixteenth floor of the new Dolphin Hotel, Kiki takes on the form of a spirit guide, and Yuki receives clairvoyant visions relating to Boku.

Kiki is the first guide to Boku’s subconscious parallel reality. Previously, she guided him in launching a new perspective on identity in *A Wild Sheep Chase* and now in *Dance Dance Dance* she helps guide him to a resolution of his struggle for personal identity. Instead of guiding him towards connections in the present like the Sheep Man, Kiki directs Boku in releasing his hold on the past and his lack of identity there. She is the one he hears crying in his dreams, she is the one he felt compelled to search for, and she led him again to the Dolphin Hotel where he meets Miss Yumiyoshi. Kiki represents the narrator’s hold on his past and she serves as an inner guide to his identity. Boku’s dependence on the past represses the present and is a source for the apathy he experiences. She tells Boku that she is “merely a projection. You guided yourself through me. I’m your phantom dance partner. I’m your shadow. I’m not anything more” (Murakami, *Dance* 371). Kiki is aided in her guidance of Boku by Yuki.
Yuki’s clairvoyance exists as another manifestation of magic realism that helps the narrator make the connections that will lead him to an understanding of the autonomous identity he is beginning to understand as he matures. A key element in Yuki’s guidance of Boku is his belief in her premonitions, built upon her knowledge of the Sheep Man and her reaction of terror to the room full of skeletons. If he did not believe in her abilities to know things others did not, then he would not have believed her revelation about Gotanda murdering Kiki. Yuki had already given him a warning by her aversion to Gotanda’s maserati. Boku’s suspicions about Gotanda are not made clear, but his quick absorption of Yuki’s revelation allows the reader to think in some way Boku already suspected his friend. At one point in the narrative, Boku charts the connections to the murdered prostitute, Mei. He notices that besides himself, Gotanda, and possibly Hiraku Makimura—Yuki’s father—were the only other people with possible connections to Mei and Kiki whom he knew.

The three main characters Boku bonds with throughout the novel, Yuki, Gotanda and Miss Yumiyoshi, do not guide him like the Sheep Man and Kiki. Instead, they are allegories for his struggle with identity. Yuki’s premonitions guide him, but only in an external way. She connects him with knowledge crucial to the external parts of his investigation. His non-familial friendship with a thirteen-year-old girl may seem strange, but Yuki is an important part of his self realizations. Yuki’s name means “snow.” Boku needs Yuki so that he can see that there is more to society than “shoveling cultural snow.” Boku’s relationship with Yuki is not a form of quasi-fatherhood; instead, he is a mentor and friend. Both characters regret the age difference, which keeps them from
becoming a couple. Boku tells Yuki how beautiful she is and that if he was a teenager he would be completely in love with her, while Yuki shows her feelings by her extreme jealousy over the call girl in Boku’s hotel room in Hawaii. Jealousy aside, their relationship is not a sexual one. The complexity of their friendship is best illustrated by their conversation concerning death. Boku says, “Death is always beside me, I don’t know why. And given the slightest opening, it shows itself” (Murakami, Dance 275). Yuki demonstrates her understanding of Boku’s quest for identity when she replies to him “maybe that’s your key. Maybe death’s your connection to the world” (275). He finds the thought morbid and depressing, not ready to see what Kiki has been trying to tell him: that only through letting his regrets of the past die can he move forward into the present. Boku is unable to let go of his past. He sees Yuki as a representation of his youth. Boku did not quite fit into society as a child and as a result he rebelled against the system by becoming a student activist. Yuki, on the other hand, completely rejects the system by her refusal to go to school when she suffers the same feelings of not belonging. Boku is jealous of Yuki’s opportunities to fit outside of society’s frames. He has not gained happiness by his method of opposing the system. He remembers himself as “an impossible kid at an impossible age. I wanted to be alone, felt good being alone, but never had the chance. I was locked in these two frames, home and school” (Murakami, Dance 188). Boku never had the chance to be alone like Yuki, but she needs him to mentor her through the choices that her aloneness has given her the opportunity to make. He tells Amē, Yuki’s mother, about Yuki saying, “I’m being idealistic, I know, but the important thing is that Yuki finds her talent and has a chance to cultivate it” (Murakami,
Dance 276). Boku has to go through the process of finding and cultivating his own talent because he never had the chance to do it when he was Yuki’s age. By helping Yuki, he is helping himself. At the same time that Boku is helping Yuki take advantage of the choices he did not have, she is helping him make those choices now. Boku finally comes to realize that the possibility of change exists and when he finally admits that to himself he finds that “something came to an end” (Murakami, Dance 345). By letting go of his past and ending the grip that it has on his present, he is allowing change to happen, enabling him to enter the present.

If Yuki represents Boku’s changing view of his past, then Miss Yumiyoshi is Boku’s tie to the present and the future. She exists in the real world. Sometimes she too fears being swallowed up by her job. Miss Yumiyoshi admits to Boku occasionally her “private life and identity get dragged into this hotel world, and then they get swallowed up” (Murakami, Dance 301). He helps her overcome her anxieties by admitting that everyone has those concerns and that she is not alone. She realizes that there is a difference between Boku’s fears and her own. While hers are the normal concerns of being caught in a hectic lifestyle, his fears are a result of his not having found a way to anchor his life. Boku realizes that his feelings for Yumiyoshi are his anchor to reality, her breath on his arm is real. He does not want to be alone anymore and is afraid of becoming a ghost. He accepts that he is just an ordinary person and believes that Yumiyoshi is the knot that ties all the fragments of himself to this reality. He finally knows who he is and what he wants out of his life. With Yumiyoshi, Boku comes to the realization that he has found happiness and, with his happiness, he wonders if “maybe, it
was time to give up the shoveling habit. Do something for myself for a change. Without
the deadlines. Something for myself. Not a novel or anything. But something for
myself” (Murakami, Dance 383). Boku’s emphasis on himself comes from his final
acceptance of his having a personal “self” that belongs solely to him. He is no longer
satisfied with shoveling out cultural snow for the corporate system. He needs to work at
something that fulfills his needs, not those of someone else. Boku is able to investigate
the nature of his self discovery by traveling to the sixteenth floor to speak with the Sheep
Man.

The Sheep Man exists in that parallel space just for Boku, yet on several
occasions Miss Yumiyoshi encounters the parallel sixteenth floor; and Yuki can see the
Sheep Man when she looks at Boku. Both of these characters are forming ties with the
narrator that enable them to glimpse his emerging identity. However, only the narrator
looking for answers enters the darkness of the sixteenth floor and travels to the Sheep
Man. When he is face to face with the Sheep Man, Boku learns that in this space that he
has created everything he is searching for exists. The Sheep Man explains that Boku has
lost many things and has come undone, and his purpose is to retie his existence. Boku
admits he is no longer anchored to anything. The Sheep Man advises Boku that
“Dancingiseverything” and instructs him to dance “aslongasthemusicplays. Yougotta
dance” (Murakami, Dance 86). Boku must now rejoin the living by forming
relationships in the real world. Only through the dancing can he regain everything he has
lost. The Sheep Man is there to guide Boku in the dance of reentering society with his
identity intact.
Dancing then becomes Murakami's controlling metaphor for social integration. The act of making connections is what life is all about. This is especially true in a society such as Japan's where the current generation is living in a constant balance between tradition and modernization. Dancing serves as the bridge between both Boku and Japan's past and the future. In *A Wild Sheep Chase* Boku is stuck in the monotony of everyday life. When he begins searching for the Sheep, he begins "to dance." Boku looks back over the events leading up to his final trip to the Dolphin Hotel and considers the nature of his own dance. He reflects, "one thing led to another. Connect the dots. Dance to the music and here's where it gets you. *Was I dancing my best?* I checked back over my steps in order. Not so bad. Not sublime, but not so bad" (Murakami, *Dance* 233). He comes to the conclusion that he would take the same dance steps again. His dancing pulls away from the alienation of his past and into relationships with others much as Japan's dancing pulls the nation away from its traditional isolation and into modernity. Japan's dancing opened up its borders and cultures to the West after centuries of isolation creating the necessity for new dance steps to mediate the relationship between Japan and the West. Dancing becomes the action through which tradition informs modernity, neither is replaced by the other. Tradition, the past, and modernity, the future, are blended together to build a Japan secure in its national identity yet capable of the flexibility necessary in a modern global economy. The process of creating a merging of the past with the present through the dance of interrelations is not an instantaneous one. An equal balance between tradition and modernity takes time to create.
Boku’s self actualization, wherein he finds balance between autonomy and Japanese present and historical culture, occurs over a four year process begun in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. At the same time his development is reinforced in the narrative by other characters who have to take the same journey. His childhood acquaintance, Gotanda, is struggling with many of the issues that Boku is dealing with, only in a more public manner. Gotanda has become trapped in an image not of his own design. He complains to Boku that he is “fed up with this life they have me living. I’m their life-size dress-up doll. Sewed together with loans and mortgages” (Murakami, *Dance* 290). Gotanda appears to have everything in a society that values commodities, but he does not have the one thing that he wants most, love. He has let himself be shaped by the image of what a Japanese movie star should be and has not allowed himself to find out who he is. Instead, he has himself become a commodity. He internalizes his struggle with his own identity much as Boku does, but Gotanda’s internalization has tragic repercussions. Boku’s internalized searching takes on the form of his guides, Kiki and the Sheep Man, and even the Rat’s ghost, but Gotanda is not able to accept the guides given to him. When faced with Kiki and her representation of past regrets, Gotanda cannot learn from her. Just as Kiki is Boku’s inner self, she is also Gotanda’s. He explains to Boku that he “wasn’t strangling her, I was strangling my shadow. I remember thinking, if only I could choke my shadow off, I’d get some health. Except it wasn’t my shadow. It was Kiki” (Murakami, *Dance* 356). Just as the Gatekeeper in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* severed individuals’ shadows from them, Gotanda mistakenly believed that suppressing and killing off his shadow/identity would gain him happiness inside the role
that society placed him in. The growing relationship between Gotanda and Boku is strengthened by Gotanda's increasingly intimate confessions. This is because loss of face is still greatly feared in Japanese public life. Therefore, private confession is eschewed in favor of public conformity. By opening up to Boku, Gotanda is risking public shame and humiliation (Hedgepath 57). He illustrates the consequences of giving in to industry and is a foil for Boku. Gotanda symbolizes what would happen if Boku were to fail in his search for individual autonomy by strangling his own shadow.

Murakami recurrently uses a person's shadow and shadow imagery in his representation of the struggle for individuality. He first introduces the concept of the shadow as equal to a person's identity in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. Murakami emphasizes the danger of severing a person's identity from him or herself through the experiences in the Town, and in Gotanda's experiences. The people of the Town, once the Gatekeeper strips them of their shadows, lose their sense of who they are apart from their functionary roles in society, whereas Gotanda is an example of the physical and emotional dangers of detaching from one's identity and not conforming to the proscribed functionary role. The readers are not sure what effect the separation will eventually have when Boku says farewell to his Shadow at the pool in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, but they become harshly aware of the consequences of Gotanda's separation. He is unable to take the steps into the darkness that would allow him to discover his identity; instead, he turns to violence and eventually murder as a means of rebelling against his social entrapment. It is Gotanda's death that affects Boku the most, because he is aware that he faces the same choices that Gotanda
faced. Gotanda’s death causes him despair because Boku considers Gotanda’s death as unsalvageable. There is now no chance for Gotanda to regain an identity for himself separate from his bestowed public one. Boku believed that “Gotanda never really got himself in tune with his inner impulses. He pushed himself as far as he could, to the furthest edge of his awareness—and then right across the line into that dark otherworld” (Murakami, Dance 361). He could not find his shadow and ended up in the darkness of death. His physical death terminates the possibility of the symbolic death of identity and its subsequent rebirth Boku is experiencing. Boku, in Dance Dance Dance, understands Gotanda because they are traversing the same landscape but deal with the terrain differently. Boku asks questions and listens for answers from Kiki, while Gotanda feels destruction of her would alleviate his problems. Gotanda’s failure to conform to society or find his autonomy ultimately ends in his own destruction, while Boku looks to Kiki as a guide through the shadow between conformity and self-government.

When Boku dreams of Kiki for the last time, she is half in shadows, “positioned neither in light nor darkness, but exactly in between” (Murakami, Dance 370). Boku recognizes the delicate balance and chooses not to disturb it by encroaching on her existence. The six skeletons now gone from the room prompt Boku to ask Kiki if she disposed of them. She answers him by replying that maybe he killed them. Boku is not sure what the skeletons’ appearance and disappearance mean. He knows that one is Dick North, Amé’s lover who lost his arm in Vietnam. The rest he deduces are Mei, Kiki, Gotanda, and the Rat, all people he has recently lost. The sixth skeleton remains unaccounted for. Boku worries that it may represent losing Yuki or Miss Yumiyoshi, and
both thoughts terrify him. Kiki explains to Boku that the skeletons are him because everything in the parallel reality he created. Later when he visits the alternate sixteenth floor in the Dolphin Hotel, he finds the Sheep Man missing. The sixth skeleton then becomes the Sheep Man, or in essence the part of Boku that was searching for his identity. Now that he is at the end of his quest he no longer needs Kiki or the parts of himself manifest in the Sheep Man. He knows that he could not leave things half done. It is clear to him that “a half-gray shadow would cloud my path for the rest of my days” if he fails to complete his self revelations (Murakami, *Dance* 296). The half-gray shadow represents only partially knowing his core identity. His drive for a complete shadow enables him to not give up as Gotanda did, but to see things through to the end. All the missing skeletons signify Boku’s release of the past when he finally encounters and embraces his true identity.

Boku’s investigations take him full circle. They begin and end with the Dolphin Hotel. Murakami writes, “here was reality, I didn’t have to go further. I was already there. All I had to do was to recover the knot to be connected. It’s what I’d been seeking for years. What the Sheep Man held together” (Murakami, *Dance* 386). The knot Boku refers to is his ability to connect to a social group. He realizes that he no longer has to exist on the fringe of corporate society. He understands that he is himself and therefore a part of Japanese corporate society because it is that society and its history that has shaped him. He can now believe that diverse individuals just like him make up society. Boku stops feeling isolated and mediocre and no longer bases his happiness on fitting in with the communal system. He is finally ready to reenter his life, instead of detaching himself
from it. His relationship with Miss Yumiyoshi serves as his anchor to this reality and life.

Literary critic Yoshio Iwamoto believes *Dance Dance Dance* “is an allegorical game, strewn with indirect comments about the glossy postmodern world of an advanced capitalist culture that makes establishing anchors impossible” (“Dance” 889). I disagree with his statement because Boku is able to create through his experience anchors that will connect him to reality. However, the reconnection of his core identity with reality does not come without a price. He has suffered many losses including friends and his career, and as in the end of *A Wild Sheep Chase* he is finally able to cry for all that he has lost. Boku has to suffer death and rebirth before fulfilling his quest for his core identity. He comes to this awakening when he tells the reader, “my body decomposed, blew apart—and was whole again” (Murakami, *Dance* 391). Boku develops a better understanding of society that allows him to function in it while maintaining his individuality.

The struggle for individual autonomy against a communal corporate state is not completely resolved in the end of Murakami’s trilogy. As noted by Susan Napier, Murakami’s novels illustrate the search for identity in order to “underline its ultimate futility in visions of a grotesque and anonymous modern world” (455). This appears to be the case in *A Wild Sheep Chase* and *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, but it is not the case at the conclusion of *Dance Dance Dance*. The story arc revolving around Boku’s individual search is completed when he is able to reintegrate himself with society. As he connects with society on a personal level by reestablishing relationships with other people, this is not surrender to corporate conformism but a way
to erase the sense of alienation produced by the corporate system because he is reconnecting on his own terms. His changing perspective on social relations removes his alienation from society. Boku is able to love someone and anchors himself to reality in order to maintain that love.

Although the story arc is resolved in *Dance Dance Dance* on a personal level through Boku, Murakami does not resolve the underlying cause of Boku’s quest on a societal level. It is this unresolved conflict on the societal level that prompts Napier to see the search for identity as futile. However, Murakami has Boku succeed in finding his own personal identity at the end of *Dance Dance Dance*, but intentionally leaves the larger issues unresolved. The dilemmas currently facing individuals in Japan are still very real and Murakami’s narratives inform readers that societal changes must first begin on an individual level. The resolution of Murakami’s trilogy is typical of a negative thriller, especially of the hard-boiled genre.

Murakami’s novels, *A Wild Sheep Chase, Dance Dance Dance* and *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* are detective novels alike in hard-boiled style to those of Raymond Chandler (Strecher, “Murakami” 62). In contrast to Chandler’s tough boy attitude, through the nameless heroes, Murakami emphasizes concerns for others over brute strength in each of the novels. The protagonists demonstrate the contradictory traits of Chandler’s detective heroes. They must be common while remaining unusual, and yet be instilled with an instinctual morality based on honor (Chandler 237). Just as Western hard-boiled protagonists have had to create their own morality and code of ethics, Murakami’s protagonists in their avoidance of
organized society must do the same. Unfortunately, the hard-boiled protagonists cannot escape society for they need it to support their values and give substance to their identities (Margolies 85-86). Murakami’s protagonists adhere to these hard-boiled characteristics. His heroes are the common person instilled with a distinct set of ethics. Unlike in the traditional mystery genre, the hard-boiled hero does not narrow the case down to just one suspect; instead, as in most hard-boiled fiction, there is an expanding concept of guilt. Murakami uses this widening circle of guilt to act as a social critique (Hamilton 46). He does not give the reader a clear-cut “happy ending” as in a positive detective novel. Instead, Murakami’s novels are typical of the negative hard-boiled detective thriller. He leaves the reader with no real assurance that the hero will be happy and with no guarantee that the troubles the narrator faced down are gone for good (Palmer 51). One reason for the ambiguous nature of Murakami’s endings is that they illustrate the uneasy balance between Japan’s modernity and tradition.
Throughout the three novels examined in this study, Murakami traces the struggle for individuality against a communal corporate system. Despite the force of present day groupism, Murakami creates ways for his protagonists to reconstruct viable personalities outside cultural "meta-narratives." The current cultural narratives are no longer adequate in producing workable identities compatible with the globalization of Japan. Murakami’s *A Wild Sheep Chase* investigates the social and political consequences of conformity and the repercussions of nonconformity in a growing capitalistic culture. The consequences expand in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* to encompass the separation of individual identity from communal identity and the dangers of embracing a false utopian existence. Finally, in *Dance Dance Dance*, Murakami presents new perspectives for viewing Japanese society in order to reconcile Japan’s traditional past with its place in a modern globalized capitalistic market. The purpose in Murakami’s works is to suggest new forms of living out Japanese cultural identity in postmodern, globalized terms. His novels provide the readership of Japan a template for becoming individuals on a global scale. However, Murakami’s postmodern pastiche criticizes the negative aspects industrialization has had on Japanese culture, such as the erosion of family life and the hectic, result driven work force. This serves as a guide for recovering the deeper cultural values inherent in Japanese tradition so that an integration of the past with the present can occur in the formation of modern identity.
The practice of industrialization appears to offer greater individual economic freedom; however, the present state of affairs in Japan leads Murakami to disagree in his novel with this appraisal and offer a rejection of the corporate state. *A Wild Sheep Chase* views the clash of tradition and history with the onset of corporate industrialization in modern Japan as the main hindrance to Japanese self-identity. The main criticism behind Japan’s industrialization is the rapid rise it has created in mass consumerism and how this rise affects the creation of Japanese identity.

The mass consumerism of modern Japan is a new phenomenon generated from the rapid and unprecedented expansion of Japan’s economy after WWII. As historian John Clammer notes, the act of consumption produces a sense of belonging to a social group. Consumption thus becomes a means of producing identity in Japan (Clammer 167-68). However, the identity created results from a proliferation of novelty and fad items resulting in a lack of individualism. The adherence to fads and the acquisition of prepackaged items leads the consumer into a mass collectivism, not to personal choice. It follows that identity then becomes another imported ideal, or the appropriation of a Western commodity. Murakami’s novel focuses on the clash created between social conformity and personal identity. He criticizes the Japanese tendency to cultivate individuality in socially acceptable ways through collective production and consumption of goods (Reischauer 162). The experiences of Boku and Rat are meant to illustrate how the “greater uniformity and strictness of Japanese social patterns leads to a widespread sense of malaise, especially among the young, and sometimes to open revolt” (Reischauer 159). Boku’s apathy towards life and Rat’s escape from it are indicative of the struggle
between group and individual balance. Traditionally, the Japanese equated selfishness with individualism and held the concept in disregard. The merging of both Eastern and Western cultures in Japan leads to the acceptance of the Western concept of individualism as a personal responsibility (Reischauer 160).

The complexities of combining the traditions of a communal past with the needs of a capitalistic present are the problems Murakami portrays in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. Society finds it difficult to erase the conformity created by Japanese groupism because it has been an integral part of society since the Tokugawa Era, 1603-1868 (Clammer 12). Murakami’s novels illustrate that the complete erasure of the Japanese tendency to conform from their culture would result in a partial loss of Japanese tradition. *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* creates an interpretation of the past that accepts the importance of Japan’s consumption and cultural production in an attempt to meld tradition with technological advancement while at the same time serving as a cautionary tale. Murakami’s dual realities comment on the need to balance tradition with modernity. The past is not something to be turned away from, for “millions of Japanese also find self-expression through traditional dancing, music, and other art forms” much as Boku in *The End of the World* uses the music of an accordion to help him locate his lost identity (Reischauer 165). Hobbies based on traditions connect with Japan’s history and are products of Japan’s collective past that reflect great individuality albeit within socially placed boundaries. Murakami’s works are attempting to play with the boundaries surrounding self-conceptualization to encompass Japan’s cultural past as well as modern global society. The postmodern use
of stereotypes and pop images to recapture a cultural past is one way that Murakami flexes the boundaries of cultural society to include Japanese historical tradition in the emergence of multinational capitalism (Jameson 10).

As Japan becomes increasingly more globalized in economics and culture, the cynical stoicism of Murakami’s protagonists reflects society’s resistance towards cultural homogenization. Conversely, however, the competition of advancing in a globalized market lends more to individualism through the recognition of personal achievements than to a homogeneous state. Culture is not static; it is continuously changing through the interrelations existing in and between societies and people within those societies; it is this cultural “dancing” that the Sheep Man leads Boku towards. The ways in which an individual interacts amidst society helps to create the society in which the individual interacts. The importance of these creative interrelations is at the heart of Boku’s new perspective on society in Dance Dance Dance. Murakami guides the reader to the realization that alienation from society is not the answer. In order to gain autonomy within a social system, interactions must occur (Strecher, “Murakami” 64). As Marx notes in “The Grundrisse,” the human being is a “political animal” and “can individuate itself only in the midst of society” (Tucker 223). The vastly changing global culture has an effect on the political, economic, and social culture of modern Japan creating a change in how individuals in Japanese society must configure their own individuality. Older traditions must be adapted to embrace new concerns and concepts in order to keep them from vanishing completely from Japanese society.
The continuous advancement of a globalized technological culture dependant on
digital media and the processing of information as a commodity increasingly inundate
Japanese culture with foreign influences. Murakami’s novels show how these influences
are affecting traditional Japanese values through the protagonists’ actions and reactions.
The novels fashion a path for accepting the idea of a globalized identity while remaining
loyal to the heart of Japanese tradition. Allegorically, Boku is able to find his own
identity and plan his own future after reconnecting with society on both a personal and
communal level at the end of Dance Dance Dance. He is able to let go of his strong hold
on the past, embodied by Kiki, which kept him from embracing the present embodied by
Miss Yumiyoshi. His release of the past is not an abandonment of the past, for he does
not forget the past as the stripping of Boku’s Shadow in the End of the World forces
Boku to do. Instead, he is able to merge the past or tradition with the present or
modernity in a way that allows him the freedom of autonomous control over his future.

Murakami’s narratives are a way in which he can work within society to shape
society. His subject position within Japanese society is a culmination of the cultural and
historical traditional past of his nation. By being an inherent part of the system that
Murakami is trying to influence, his “narratives allow the society in which they are told,
on the one hand, to define its criteria of competence and, on the other, to evaluate
according to those criteria what is performed or can be performed within it” (Lyotard 19-
20). Thus, narrative has always constructed culture, or at least the way people view
culture. The historic writings of Japan’s literary past taken together illustrate the various
viewpoints of the Japanese on their culture. Murakami’s novels introduce a globalized
Japanese identity by combining the tenets of Japanese literary tradition with the imported Western styles of the hard-boiled genre and magic realism. He expresses his postmodern sensibility by using the Kanazoski, Gunkimono, Ninjōbon, and Shosetsu literary forms and blending them with hard-boiled style and magic realism to create a narrative forum for his investigations into Japanese identity. For example, Boku’s moral code and the average state of his existence closely follow the literature of the Edo period; while at the same time, the narrative identifies with the Western hard-boiled detective genre seamlessly inundated with elements of magic realism creating an East/West hybridity of style.

*A Wild Sheep Chase, Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* and *Dance Dance Dance* embody the Japanese struggle for individuality amidst an increasingly-corporatized society. Through the thematic explorations on identity in the novels, Murakami suggests innovative ways of living out Japanese cultural identity in postmodern, globalized terms. His heroes embrace the emergence of Japanese identity on the multinational level as an evolution of existing Japanese society while resisting blind conformity in a system no longer able to meet the needs of an advanced capitalistic nation.
NOTES

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Overview of the Project

1 I use the term “cosmopolitan” to describe Murakami’s use of magic realism here for I feel that Murakami uses aspects of magic realism to bridge the gap between empirical and imagined reality in order to signal the individual’s struggle to resist the pull of societal expectations; not as a fantastic extension of one particular land or culture as is sometimes connected with the term.

2 Murakami is applying the term here to both his creative intentions as well as the work itself.

3 Boku is the Japanese equivalent for the informal “I” used by males. The “I” protagonists of A Wild Sheep Chase, Dance Dance Dance, and the End of the World sections of Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World will hence be referred to as Boku in this study.

Critical Reception

4 The Four Noble Truths are the heart of the Buddhist religion. Thich Nhat Hanh in his book The Heart of Buddha’s Teaching defines the Four Noble Truths as follows: the first Truth is suffering, the second “is the origin, roots, nature, creation, or arising (samudaya) of suffering,” the third “is the cessation (nirodha) of creating suffering by refraining from doing the things that make us suffer,” and the fourth Truth “is the path (marga) that leads to refraining from doing the things that cause us to suffer” (Hanh 9-11). These truths are realized through following the tenants of the Noble Eightfold Path. A detailed description of each step is given in Hanh’s book.

5 Kana is the term used to denote Japanese syllabary adopted from the Chinese. There are two types; hiragana the Japanese syllabary for native words, and katakana the Japanese syllabary for foreign words (Nakao 87,115,119).

Methodology


CHAPTER THREE: Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World

1 Watashi is the Japanese equivalent for the pronoun “I”. The “I” protagonists of the Hard-Boiled Wonderland sections of Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World will hence be referred to as Watashi in this study.
LIST OF REFERENCES


